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THREE FEATHERS.

A Novel.

BY WILLIAM BLACK,

AUTHOR OF

“A PRINCESS OF THULE,” “A DAUGHTER OF HETH,” ETC.



IN THREE VOLUMES.—VOL. I.

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TO

E. W. B.

London, May 1. 1875.

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CONTENTS OF VOL. I.



CHAPTER	PAGE
I. MASTER HARRY	1
II. JIM CROW	21
III. RES AUGUSTE DOMI	41
IV. THE LAST LOOK BACK	79
V. THROWING A FLY	110
VI. THE ——— AMONG THE TAILORS	123
VII. SOME NEW EXPERIENCES	148
VIII. WENNA'S FIRST TRIUMPH	164
IX. THE RING OF EVIL OMEN	178
X. THE SNARES OF LONDON	198
XI. THE TWO PICTURES	218
XII. THE CHAIN TIGHTENS	236
XIII. AN UNEXPECTED CONVERT	254
XIV. "SIE BAT SO SANFT, SO LIEBLICH"	264
XV. A LEAVE-TAKING OF LOVERS	282

THREE FEATHERS.



CHAPTER I.

MASTER HARRY.

“You are a wicked boy, Harry,” said a delightful old lady of seventy, with pink cheeks, silvery hair, and bright eyes, to a tall and handsome lad of twenty, “and you will break your mother’s heart. But it’s the way of all you Trelyons. Good looks, bad temper, plenty of money, and the maddest fashion of spending it—there you are, the whole of you. Why won’t you go into the house?”

“It’s a nice house to go into, ain’t it?”

said the boy, with a rude laugh. "Look at it!"

It was, indeed, a nice house,—a quaint, old-fashioned, strongly-built place, that had withstood the western gales for some hundred and fifty years. And it was set amid beautiful trees, and it overlooked a picturesque little valley, and from this garden-terrace in front of it you could catch a glimpse of a tiny harbour on the Cornish coast, with its line of blue water passing out through the black rocks to the sea beyond.

"And why shouldn't the blinds be down?" said the old lady. "It's the anniversary of your father's death."

"It's always the anniversary of somebody's death," her grandson said, impatiently flicking at a standard rose with his riding-switch; "and it's nothing but snivel, snivel from morning till night, with the droning of the organ in the chapel, and

the burning of incense all about the place, and everybody and everything dressed in black, and the whole house haunted by parsons. The parsons about the neighbourhood ain't enough,—they must come from all parts of the country, and you run against 'em in the hall, and you knock them over when you're riding out at the gate, and just when you expect to get a pheasant or two at the place you know, out jumps a brace of parsons that have been picking brambles."

"Harry, Harry, where do you expect to go to, if you hate the parsons so?" the old lady said; but there was scarcely that earnestness of reproof in her tone that ought to have been there. "And yet it's the way of all you Trelyons. Did I ever tell you how your grandfather hunted poor Mr. Pascoe that winter night? Dear, dear, what a jealous man your grandfather was at that time, to be sure! And when I told him that John Pascoe had been carrying

stories to my father, and how that he (your grandfather) was to be forbidden the house, dear me, what a passion he was in! He wouldn't come near the house after that; but one night, as Mr. Pascoe was walking home, your grandfather rode after him, and overtook him, and called out, 'Look here, sir! you have been telling lies about me. I respect your cloth, and I won't lay a hand on you; but, by the Lord, I will hunt you till there isn't a rag on your back!' And sure enough he did: and when poor Mr. Pascoe understood what he meant he was nearly out of his wits, and off he went over the fields, and over the walls, and across the ditches, with your grandfather after him, driving his horse at him when he stopped, and only shouting with laughter in answer to his cries and prayers. Dear, dear, what a to-do there was all over the country side after that! and your grandfather durstn't come near the house,—or he was

too proud to come ; but we got married for all that—oh yes ! we got married for all that.”

The old lady laughed in her quiet way.

“ You were too good for a parson, grandmother, I’ll be bound,” said Master Harry Trelyon. “ You are one of the right sort, you are. If I could find any girl, now, like what you were then, see if I wouldn’t try to get her for a wife.”

“ Oh yes ! ” said the old lady, vastly pleased, and smiling a little ; “ there were two or three of your opinion at that time, Harry. Many a time I feared they would be the death of each other. And I never could have made up my mind, I do believe, if your grandfather hadn’t come in among them to settle the question. It was all over with me then. It’s the way of you Trelyons ; you never give a poor girl a chance. It isn’t ask and have,—it’s come and take ; and so a girl becomes a Trelyon

before she knows where she is. Dear, dear, what a fine man your grandfather was, to be sure; and such a pleasant, frank, good-natured way as he had with him! Nobody could say No twice to him. The girls were all wild about him; and the story there was about our marriage! Yes, indeed, I was mad about him too, only that he was just as mad about me; and that night of the ball, when my father was angry because I would not dance, and when all the young men could not understand it, for how did they know that your grandfather was out in the garden, and asking nothing less than that I should run away with him there and then to Gretna? Why, the men of that time had some spirit, lad, and the girls, too, I can tell you; and I couldn't say No to him, and away we went just before daylight, and I in my ball-dress, sure enough, and we never stopped till we got to Exeter. And then the fight for fresh horses, and off

again; and your grandfather had such a way with him, Harry, that the silliest of girls would have plucked up her spirits! And oh! the money he scattered to get the best of the horses at the posting-houses; for, of course, we knew that my father was close after us, and if he overtook us, then a convent in France for me, and good-bye to George Trelyon——”

“ Well, grandmother, don't stop! ” cried the lad before her: he had heard the story a hundred times, but he could have heard it another hundred times, merely to see the light that lit up the beautiful old face.

“ We didn't stop, you booby! ” she said, mistaking his remark; “ stopping wasn't for George Trelyon. And oh! that morning as we drove into Carlisle, and we looked back, and there, sure enough, was my father's carriage a long way off. Your grandfather swore, Harry—yes, he did; and well it might make a man swear. For our

horses were dead beat, and before we should have time to change, my father would be up to claim me. But there! it was the luckiest thing that ever happened to me, for who could have expected to find old Lady MacGorman at the door of the hotel, just getting into her carriage; and when she saw me she stared, and I was in such a fright I couldn't speak; and she called out, 'Good heavens, child, why did you run away in your ball-dress? And who's the man?' 'His name, madam,' said I, 'is George Trelyon.' For by this time he was in the yard, raging about horses. 'A nephew of the Admiral, isn't he?' she says, and I told her he was; and then quick as lightning what does she do but whip round into the yard, get hold of your grandfather, my dear, and bundle both of us into her own carriage! Harry, my father's carriage was at the end of the street, as I am a living woman. And just as we drove

off, we heard that dear, good, kind old creature call out to the people around, 'Five guineas apiece to you if you keep back the old gentleman's carriage for an hour!' and such a laughing as your grandfather had as we drove down the streets, and over the bridge, and up the hill, and out the level lanes. Dear, dear, I can see the country now. I can remember every hedge, and the two rivers we crossed, and the hills up in the north; and all the time your grandfather kept up the laugh, for he saw I was frightened. And there we were wedded, sure enough, and all in good time, for Lady MacGorman's guineas had saved us, so that we were actually driving back again when we saw my father's carriage coming along the road—at no great speed to be sure, for one of the horses was lame, and the other had cast a shoe—all the result of that good old creature's money. And then I said to your grandfather, 'What shall we do,

George?' 'We shall have to stand and deliver, Sue!' says he; and with that he had the horses pulled up, and we got out. And when my father came up he got out, too, and George took me by the hand—there was no more laughing now, I can tell you, for it was but natural I should cry a bit—and he took off his hat, and led me forward to my father. I don't know what he said, I was in such a fright; but I know that my father looked at him for a minute—and George was standing rather abashed, perhaps, but then so handsome he looked, and so good-natured!—and then my father burst into a roar of laughter, and came forward and shook him by the hand; and all that he would say then, or at any other time to the day of his death, was only this—'By Jupiter, sir, that was a devilish good pair that took you straight on end to Exeter!'"

"I scarcely remember my grandfather," the boy said; "but he couldn't have been a

handsomer man than my father, nor a better man either."

"I don't say that," the old lady observed, candidly. "Your father was just such another. 'Like father, like son,' they used to say when he was a boy. But then, you see, your father would go and choose a wife for himself in spite of everybody, just like all you Trelyons, and so——"

But she remembered, and checked herself. She began to tell the lad in how far he resembled his grandfather in appearance, and he accepted these descriptions of his features and figure in a heedless manner, as of one who had grown too familiar with the fact of his being handsome to care about it. Had not every one paid him compliments, more or less indirect, from his cradle upwards? He was, indeed, all that the old lady would have desired to see in a Trelyon — tall, square-shouldered, clean-limbed, with dark grey eyes set under black

eyelashes, a somewhat aquiline nose, proud and well-cut lips, a handsome forehead, and a complexion which might have been pale, but for its having been bronzed by constant exposure to sun and weather. There was something very winning about his face, when he chose to be winning; and when he laughed, the laughter, being quite honest and careless and musical, was delightful to hear. With all these personal advantages, joined to a fairly quick intelligence and a ready sympathy, Master Harry Trelyon ought to have been a universal favourite. So far from that being the case, a section of the persons whom he met, and whom he shocked by his rudeness, quickly dismissed him as an irreclaimable cub; another section, with whom he was on better terms, considered him a bad-tempered lad, shook their heads in a humorous fashion over his mother's trials, and were inclined to keep out of his way; while the best of his friends

endeavoured to throw the blame of his faults on his bringing up, and maintained that he had many good qualities if only they had been properly developed. The only thing certain about these various criticisms was that they did not concern very much the subject of them.

“And if I am like my grandfather,” he said, good-naturedly, to the old lady, who was seated in a garden-chair, “why don’t you get me a wife such as he had?”

“You? A wife?” she repeated, indignantly; remembering that, after all, to praise the good looks and excuse the hot-headedness of the Trelyons was not precisely the teaching this young man needed. “You take a wife? Why, what girl would have you? You are a mere booby. You can scarcely write your name. George Trelyon was a gentleman, sir. He could converse in six languages——”

“And swear considerably in one, I’ve

heard," the lad said, with an impertinent laugh.

"You take a wife? I believe the stable-boys are better educated than you are in manners, as well as in learning. All you are fit for is to become a horse-breaker to a cavalry regiment, or a gamekeeper; and I do believe it is that old wretch, Pentecost Luke, who has ruined you. Oh! I heard how Master Harry used to defy his governess, and would say nothing to her for days together, but

*'As I was going to St. Ives,
I met fifty old wives.'*

Then, old Luke had to be brought in, and Luke's cure for stubbornness was to give the brat a gun and teach him to shoot starlings. Oh! I know the whole story, my son, though I wasn't in Cornwall at the time. And then Master Harry must be sent to school; but two days afterwards Master Harry is discovered at the edge of a wood, coolly seated

with a gun in his hand, waiting for his ferrets to drive out the rabbits. Then Master Harry is furnished with a private tutor; but a parcel of gunpowder is found below the gentleman's chair, with the heads of several lucifer matches lying about. So Master Harry is allowed to have his own way; and his master and preceptor is a lying old gamekeeper, and Master Harry can't read a page out of a book, but he can snare birds, and stuff fish, and catch butterflies, and go cliff-hunting on a horse that is bound to break his neck some day. Why, sir, what do you think a girl would have to say to you if you married her? She would expect you to take her into society; she would expect you to be agreeable in your manners, and be able to talk to people. Do you think she would care about your cunning ways of catching birds, as if you were a cat or a sparrowhawk?"

He only flicked at the rose, and laughed; lecturing had but little effect on him.

“Do you think a girl would come to a house like this,—one half of it filled with dogs, and birds, and squirrels, and what not, the other furnished like a chapel in a cemetery? A combination of a church and a menagerie, that’s what I call it.”

“Grandmother,” he said, “these parsons have been stuffing your head full of nonsense about me.”

“Have they?” said the old lady, sharply, and eyeing him keenly. “Are you sure it is all nonsense? You talk of marrying,—and you know that no girl of your own station in life would look at you. What about that public-house in the village, and the two girls there, and your constant visits?”

He turned round with a quick look of anger in his face.

“Who told you such infamous stories? I suppose one of the cringing, sneaking, white-livered—— Bah!”

He switched the head off the rose, and strode away, saying, as he went—

“Grandmother, you mustn’t stay here long. The air of the place affects even you. Another week of it, and you’ll be as mean as the rest of them.”

But he was in a very bad temper, despite his careless gait. There was a scowl on the handsome and boyish face that was not pleasant to see. He walked round to the stables, kicked about the yard while his horse was being saddled, and then rode out of the grounds, and along the highway, until he went clattering down the steep and stony main street of Eglosilyan.

The children knew well this black horse : they had a superstitious fear of him, and they used to scurry into the cottages when his wild rider, who seldom tightened rein, rode down the precipitous thoroughfare. But just at this moment, when young Trelyon was paying little heed as to where

he was going, a small, white-haired bundle of humanity came running out of a doorway, and stumbled, and fell right in the way of the horse. The lad was a good rider, but all the pulling up in the world could not prevent the forefeet of the horse, as they were shot out into the stones, from rolling over that round bundle of clothes. Trelyon leapt to the ground, and caught up the child, who stared at him with big, blue, frightened eyes.

“It’s you, young Pentecost, is it? And what the dickens do you mean by trying to knock over my horse, eh?”

The small boy was terrified, but quite obviously not hurt a bit; and his captor, leading the horse with one hand and affixing the bridle to the door, carried him into the cottage: “Well, Mother Luke,” said young Trelyon, “I know you’ve got too many children, but do you expect that I’m going to put them out of the way for you?”

She uttered a little scream, and caught at the boy.

“Oh! there’s no harm done; but I suppose I must give him a couple of sovereigns because he nearly frightened me out of my wits. Poor little kid! It’s hard on him that you should have given him such a name. I suppose you thought it was Cornish because it begins with *Pen*.”

“You know ’twere his vather’s name, Maäster Harry,” said Mrs. Luke, smiling as she saw that the child’s chubby fingers were being closed over two bright gold pieces.

Just at that moment, Master Harry, his eyes having got accustomed to the twilight of the kitchen, perceived that among the little crowd of children, at the fireside end, a young lady was sitting. She was an insignificant little person, with dark eyes; she had a slate in her hand; the children were round her in a circle.

“Oh, I beg your pardon, Miss Wemma!”

the young man said, removing his hat quickly, and blushing all over his handsome face. "I did not see you in the dark. Is your father at the inn?—I was going to see him. I hope I haven't frightened you?"

"Yes, my father has come back from Plymouth," said the young lady, quietly, and without rising. "And I think you might be a little more careful in riding through the village, Mr. Trelyon."

"Good-morning," he said. "Take better care of Master Pentecost, Mother Lake." And with that he went out, and got into the saddle again, and set off to ride down to the inn, not quite so recklessly as heretofore.

CHAPTER II.

JIM CROW.

WHEN Miss Wenna, or Morwenna, as her mother in a freak of romanticism had called her, had finished her teaching, and had inspected some fashioning of garments in which Mrs. Luke was engaged, she put on her light shawl and her hat, and went out into the fresh air. She was now standing in the main street of Eglosilyan; and there were houses right down below her, and houses far above her, but a stranger would have been puzzled to say where this odd little village began and ended. For it was built in a straggling fashion on the sides of two little ravines; and the small stone cottages were so curiously scattered among

the trees, and the plots of gardens were so curiously banked up with walls that were smothered in wild flowers, that you could only decide which was the main thoroughfare by the presence there of two greystone chapels—one the Wesleyans' Ebenezer, the other the Bible Christians'. The churches were far away on the uplands, where they were seen like towers along the bleak cliffs by the passing sailors. But perhaps Eglosilyan proper ought to be considered as lying down in the hollow, where the two ravines converged. For here was the chief inn; and here was the overshot flour-mill; and here was the strange little harbour, tortuous, narrow, and deep, into which one or two heavy coasters came for slate, bringing with them timber and coal. Eglosilyan is certainly a picturesque place; but one's difficulty is to get anything like a proper view of it. The black and mighty cliffs at the mouth of the harbour, where the

Atlantic seethes and boils in the calmest weather, the beautiful blue-green water under the rocks and along the stone quays, the quaint bridge, and the mill, are pleasant to look at; but where is Eglosilyan? Then if you go up one of the ravines, and get among the old houses, with their tree-fuchsias, and hydrangeas, and marigolds, and lumps of white quartz in the quaint little gardens, you find yourself looking down the chimneys of one portion of Eglosilyan, and looking up to the doorsteps of another—everywhere a confusion of hewn rock, and natural terrace, and stone walls, and bushes, and hart's-tongue fern. Some thought that the Trelyon Arms should be considered the natural centre of Eglosilyan; but you could not see half a dozen houses from any of its windows. Others would have given the post of honour to the National School, which had been there since 1843;

but it was up in a by-street, and could only be approached by a flight of steps cut in the slate wall that banked up the garden in front of it. Others, for reasons which need not be mentioned, held that the most important part of Eglosilyan was the Napoleon Hotel—a humble little pot-house, frequented by the workers in the slate-quarries, who came there to discuss the affairs of the nation and hear the news. Anyhow, Eglosilyan was a green, bright, rugged, and picturesque little place, oftentimes wet with the western rains, and at all times fresh and sweet with the moist breezes from the Atlantic.

Miss Wenna went neither down the street nor up the street, but took a rough and narrow little path leading by some of the cottages to the cliffs overlooking the sea. There was a sound of music in the air; and by-and-by she came in sight of an elderly man, who, standing in an odd

little donkey-cart, and holding the reins in one hand, held with the other a cornopean, which he played with great skill. No one in Eglosilyan could tell precisely whether Michael Jago had been bugler to some regiment, or had acquired his knowledge of the cornopean in a travelling show ; but everybody liked to hear the cheerful sound, and came out to the cottage-door to welcome him, as he went from village to village with his cart, whether they wanted to buy suet or not. And now, as Miss Wenna saw him approach, he was playing “The Girl I left behind Me ;” and as there was no one about to listen to him, the pathos of certain parts, and the florid and skilful execution of others, showed that Mr. Jago had a true love for music, and did not merely use it to advertise his wares.

“ Good-morning to you, Mr. Jago,” said Miss Wenna, as he came up.

"'Marnin, Miss Rosewarne," he said, taking down his cornopean.

"This is a narrow road for your cart."

"'Tain't a very good way; but bless you, me and my donkey we're used to any zart of a road. I dü believe we could go down to the bache, down the face of Black Cliff."

"Mr. Jago, I want to say something to you. If you are dealing with old Mother Keam to-day, you'll give her a good extra bit, won't you? And so with Mrs. Geswetherick, for she has had no letter from her son now for three months. And this will pay you, and you'll say nothing about it, you know."

She put the coin in his hand—it was an arrangement of old standing between the two.

"Well, yü be a good young lady; yaas, yü be," he said, as he drove on; and then she heard him announcing his arrival to the people of Eglosilyan by playing, in a

very elaborate manner, "Love's Young Dream."

The solitary young lady who was taking her morning walk now left this rugged road, and found herself on the bleak and high uplands of the coast. Over there was the sea—a fair summer sea; and down into the south-west stretched a tall line of cliff, black, precipitous, and jagged, around the base of which even this blue sea was churned into seething masses of white. Close by was a church; and the very gravestones were propped up, so that they should withstand the force of the gales that sweep over those windy plains.

She went across the uplands, and passed down to a narrow neck of rock, which connected with the mainland a huge projecting promontory, on the summit of which was a square and strongly built tower. On both sides of this ledge of rock the sea from below passed into narrow channels, and roared

into gigantic caves ; but when once you had ascended again to the summit of the tall projecting cliff, the distance softened the sound into a low continuous murmur, and the motion of the waves beneath you was only visible in the presence of that white foam where the black cliffs met the blue sea.

She went out pretty nearly to the verge of the cliff, where the close, short, wind-swept sea-grass gave way to immense and ragged masses of rock, descending sheer into the waves below ; and here she sat down, and took out a book, and began to read. But her thoughts were busier than her eyes. Her attention would stray away from the page before her to the empty blue sea, where scarcely a sail was to be seen, and to the far headlands lying under the white of the summer sky. One of these headlands was Tintagel ; and close by were the ruins of the great castle, where Uther

Pendragon kept his state, where the mystic Arthur was born, where the brave Sir Tristram went to see his true love, La Belle Isoulde. All that world had vanished, and gone into silence ; could anything be more mute and still than those bare uplands out at the end of the world, these voiceless cliffs, and the empty circle of the sea ? The sun was hot on the rocks beneath her, where the pink quartz lay encrusted among the slate ; but there was scarcely the hum of an insect to break the stillness, and the only sign of life about was the circling of one or two sea-birds, so far below her that their cries could not be heard.

“ Yes, it was a long time ago,” the girl was thinking, as the book lay unheeded on her knee. “ A sort of mist covers it now, and the knights seem great and tall men as you think of them riding through the fog, almost in silence. But then there were the brighter days, when the tourna-

ments were held, and the sun shone out, and the noble ladies wore rich colours, and every one came to see how beautiful they were. And how fine it must have been to have sat there, and have all the knights ready to fight for you, and glad when you gave them a bit of ribbon or a smile ! And in these days, too, it must be a fine thing to be a noble lady, and beautiful, and tall, like a princess ; and to go among the poor people, putting everything to rights, because you have lots of money, and because the roughest of the men look up to you, and think you a queen, and will do anything you ask. What a happy life a grand and beautiful lady must have, when she is tall, and fair-haired, and sweet in her manner ; and every one around her is pleased to serve her, and she can do a kindness by merely saying a word to the poor people ! But if you are only Jim Crow ? There's Maby'n, now, she is everybody's

favourite because she is so pretty ; and whatever she does, that is always beautiful and graceful, because she is so. Father never calls *her* Jim Crow. And I ought to be jealous of her, for every one praises her, and mere strangers ask for her photograph ; and Mr. Roscorla always writes to her, and Mr. Trelyon stuffed those squirrels for her, though he never offered to stuff squirrels for me. But I cannot be jealous of Mabyn—I cannot even try. She looks at you with her blue, soft eyes, and you fall in love with her ; and that is the advantage of being handsome, and beautiful, for you can please every one, and make every one like you, and confer favours on people all day long. But if you are small, and plain, and dark—if your father calls you Jim Crow—what can you do ? ”

These despondent fancies did not seem to depress her much. The gloom of them was certainly not visible on her face, nor

yet in the dark eyes, which had a strange and winning earnestness in them. She pulled a bit of tormentil from among the close warm grass on the rocks, and she hummed a line or two of "Wapping Old Stairs." Then she turned to her book; but by-and-by her eyes wandered away again, and she fell to thinking.

"If you were a man, now," she was silently saying to herself, "that would be quite different. It would not matter how ugly you were—for you could try to be brave or clever, or a splendid rider, or something of that kind—and nobody would mind how ugly you were. But it's very hard to be a woman, and to be plain; you feel as if you were good for nothing, and had no business to live. They say that you should cultivate the graces of the mind; but it's only old people who say that; and perhaps you may not have any mind to cultivate. How much better it would be to

be pretty while you are young, and leave the cultivation of the mind for after years ! and that is why I have to prevent mother from scolding Mabyn for never reading a book. If I were like Mabyn, I should be so occupied in giving people the pleasure of looking at me and talking to me that I should have no time for books. Mabyn is like a princess. And if she were a grand lady, instead of being only an innkeeper's daughter, what a lot of things she could do about Eglosilyan ! She could go and persuade Mr. Roscorla, by the mere sweetness of her manner, to be less suspicious of people, and less bitter in talking ; she could go up to Mrs. Trelyon and bring her out more among her neighbours, and make the house pleasanter for her son ; she could go to my father and beg him to be a little more considerate to mother when she is angry ; she might get some influence over Mr. Trelyon himself, and

make him less of a petulant boy. Perhaps Mabyn may do some of these things, when she gets a little older. It ought to please her to try at all events ; and who can withstand her when she likes to be affectionate and winning? Not Jim Crow, any way."

She heaved a sigh, not a very dismal one, and got up and prepared to go home. She was humming carelessly to herself—

*Your Polly has never been false, she declares,
Since last time we parted at Wapping Old Stairs :*

—she had got that length when she was startled into silence by the sound of a horse's feet, and, turning quickly round, found Mr. Trelyon galloping up the steep slope that reaches across to the mainland. It was no pleasant place to ride across, for a stumble of the animal's foot would have sent horse and rider down into the gulfs below, where the blue-green sea was surging in among the black rocks.

“Oh! how could you be so foolish as to do that?” she cried. “I beg of you to come down, Mr. Trelyon. I cannot——”

“Why, Dick is as sure-footed as I am,” said the lad, his handsome face flushing with the ride up from Eglosilyan. “I thought I should find you here. There’s no end of a row going on at the inn, Miss Wenna, and that’s a fact. I fancied I’d better come and tell you; for there’s no one can put things straight like you, you know.”

A quarrel between her father and her mother—it was of no rare occurrence, and she was not much surprised.

“Thank you, Mr. Trelyon,” she said. “It is very kind of you to have taken the trouble. I will go down at once.”

But she was looking rather anxiously at him, as he turned round his horse.

“Mr. Trelyon,” she said, quickly, “would you oblige me by getting down

and leading your horse across until you reach the path?"

He was out of the saddle in a moment.

"I will walk down with you to Eglosilyan, if you like," he said, carelessly. "You often come up here, don't you?"

"Nearly every day. I always take a walk in the forenoon."

"Does Mabyn ever go with you?" His companion noticed that he always addressed her as Miss Wenna, whereas her sister was simply Mabyn.

"Not often."

"I wonder she doesn't ride—I am sure she would look well on horseback—don't you think so?"

"Mabyn would look well anywhere," said the eldest sister, with a smile.

"If she would like to try a lady's saddle on your father's cob, I would send you one down from the Hall," the lad said. "My mother never rides now. But perhaps I'd

better speak to your father about it. Oh! by the way, he told me a capital story this morning that he heard in coming from Plymouth to Launceston in the train. Two farmers belonging to Launceston had got into a carriage the day before, and found in it a parson, against whom they had a grudge. He didn't know either of them by sight; and so they pretended to be strangers, and sat down opposite each other. One of them put up the window; the other put it down with a bang. The first drew it up again, and said, 'I desire you to leave the window alone, sir!' The other said, 'I mean to have that window down, and if you touch it again I will throw you out of it.' Meanwhile, the parson at the other end of the carriage, who was a little fellow and rather timid, had got into an agony of fright; and at last, when the two men seemed about to seize each other by the throat, he called

out, 'For Heaven's sake, gentlemen, do not quarrel. Sir, I beg of you, I implore you, as a clergyman I entreat you, to put up that knife!' And then, of course, they both turned upon him like tigers, and slanged him, and declared they would break his back over the same window. Fancy the fright he was in!"

The boy laughed merrily.

"Do you think that was a good joke?" the girl beside him asked, quietly.

He seemed a little embarrassed.

"Do you think it was a very manly and courageous thing for two big farmers to frighten a small and timid clergyman? I think it was rather mean and cowardly. I see no joke in it at all."

His face grew ~~more and more~~ red.

"I don't suppose they meant any harm," he said, curtly; "but you know we can't all be squaring every word and look by the Prayer-Book. And I suppose the parson

himself, if he had known, would not have been so fearfully serious but that he could have taken a joke like any one else. By the way, this is the nearest road to Trevenna, isn't it? I have got to ride over there before the afternoon, Miss Rosewarne; so I shall bid you good-day."

He got on horseback again, and took off his cap to her, and rode away.

"Good-day, Mr. Trelyon," she said, meekly.

And so she walked down to the inn by herself, and was inclined to reproach herself for being so very serious, and for being unable to understand a joke like any one else. Yet she was not unhappy about it. It was a pity if Mr. Trelyon were annoyed with her; but then, she had long ago taught herself to believe that she could not easily please people, as Mabyn could; and she cheerfully accepted the fact. Sometimes, it is true, she indulged in idle dreams of

what she might do if she were beautiful, and rich, and noble ; but she soon laughed herself out of these foolish fancies, and they left no sting of regret behind them. At this moment, as she walked down to Eglosilyan, with the tune of “ Wapping Old Stairs ” rocking itself to sleep in her head, and with her face brightened by her brisk walk, there was neither disappointment, nor envy, nor ambition in her mind. Not for her, indeed, were any of those furious passions that shake and set afire the lives of men and women ; her lot was the calm and placid lot of the unregarded, and with it she was well content.

CHAPTER III.

RES ANGUSTÆ DOMI.

WHEN George Rosewarne, the father of this Miss Wenna, lived in eastern Devonshire, many folks thought him a fortunate man. He was the land-steward of a large estate, the owner of which lived in Paris, so that Rosewarne was practically his own master; he had a young and pretty wife, desperately fond of him; he had a couple of children and a comfortable home. As for himself, he was a tall, reddish-bearded, manly-looking fellow; the country folks called him Handsome George as they saw him riding his rounds of a morning; and they thought it a pity Mrs. Rosewarne was

so often poorly, for she and her husband looked well together when they walked to church.

Handsome George did not seem much troubled by his wife's various ailments; he would only give the curtest answer when asked about her health. Yet he was not in any distinct way a bad husband. He was a man vaguely unwilling to act wrongly, but weak in staving off temptation; there was a sort of indolent selfishness about him of which he was scarcely aware; and to indulge this selfishness he was capable of a good deal of petty deceit and even treachery of a sort. It was not these failings, however, that made the relations of husband and wife not very satisfactory. Mrs. Rosewarne was passionately fond of her husband, and proportionately jealous of him. She was a woman of impulsive imagination and of sympathetic nature, clever, bright and fanciful, well-read and well-taught, and

altogether made of finer stuff than Handsome George. But this passion of jealousy altogether overmastered her reason. When she did try to convince herself that she was in the wrong, the result was merely that she resolved to keep silence; but this forcible repression of her suspicions was worse in its effects than the open avowal of them. When the explosion came, George Rosewarne was mostly anxious to avoid it. He did not seek to set matters straight. He would get into a peevish temper for a few minutes, and tell her she was a fool; then he would go out for the rest of the day, and come home sulky in the evening. By this time she was generally in a penitent mood; and there is nothing an indolent sulky person likes so much as to be coaxed and caressed, with tears of repentance and affectionate promises, into a good temper again. There were too many of such scenes in George Rosewarne's home.

Mrs. Rosewarne may have been wrong, but people began to talk. For there had come to live at the Hall a certain Mrs. Shirley, who had lately returned from India, and was the sister-in-law, or some such relation, of George Rosewarne's master. She was a good-looking woman of forty, fresh-coloured and free-spoken, a little too fond of brandy-and-water, folks said, and a good deal too fond of the handsome steward, who now spent most of his time up at the big house. They said she was a grass-widow. They said there were reasons why her relations wished her to be buried down there in the country, where she received no company, and made no efforts to get acquainted with the people who had called on her and left their cards. And amid all this gossip the name of George Rosewarne too frequently turned up; and there were nods and winks when Mrs. Shirley and the steward were seen to be riding about the

country from day to day, presumably not always conversing about the property.

The blow fell at last, and that in a fashion that needs not be described here. There was a wild scene between two angry women. A few days after, a sallow-complexioned, white-haired old gentleman arrived from Paris, and was confronted by a red-faced fury, who gloried in her infatuation and disgrace, and dared him to interfere. Then there was a sort of conference of relatives held in the house which she still inhabited. The result of all this, so far as the Rosewarne were concerned, was simply that the relatives of the woman, to hush the matter up and prevent further scandal, offered to purchase for George Rosewarne the "Trelyon Arms" at Eglosilyan, on condition that he should immediately, with his family, betake himself to that remote corner of the world, and undertake to hold no further communi-

cation of any sort with the woman who still (with some flash of rhetoric, which probably meant nothing) swore that she would follow him to the end of the earth. George Rosewarne was pleased with the offer, and accepted it. He might have found some difficulty in discovering another stewardship, after the events that had just occurred. On the other hand, the "Trelyon Arms" at Eglosilyan was not a mere public-house. It was an old-fashioned, quaint, and comfortable inn, practically shut up during the winter, and in the summer made the head-quarters of a few families who had discovered it, and who went there as regularly as the warm weather came round. A few antiquarian folks, too, and a stray geologist or so, generally made up the family party that sat down to dinner every evening in the big dining-room; and who that ever made one of the odd circle meeting in this strange

and out-of-the-way place, ever failed to return to it when the winter had finally cleared away and the Atlantic got blue again?

George Rosewarne went down to see about it. He found in the inn an efficient housekeeper, who was thoroughly mistress of her duties and of the servants, so that he should have no great trouble about it, even though his wife were too ill to help. As for his daughters, he resolved that they should have nothing whatsoever to do with the inn: but, on the contrary, be trained in all the ordinary accomplishments of young ladies; for he was rather a proud man. And so the Rosewarnes were drafted down to the Cornish coast; and as Mrs. Rosewarne was of Cornish birth, and as she had given both her daughters Cornish names, they gradually ceased to be regarded as strangers. They made many acquaintances and friends. Mrs. Rosewarne was a bright,

rapid, playful talker; a woman of considerable reading and intelligence, and a sympathetic listener. Her husband knew all about horses, and dogs, and farming, and what not; so that young Harry Trelyon, for example, was in the habit of consulting him almost daily.

They had a little parlour abutting on what once had been a bar, and here one or two friends sometimes dropped in to have a chat. There was a bar no longer. The business of the inn was conducted overhead, and was exclusively of the nature described above. The pot-house of Eglosilyan was the Napoleon Hotel, a dilapidated place, halfway up one of the steep streets.

But in leaving Devonshire for Cornwall, the Rosewarnes had carried with them a fatal inheritance. They could not leave behind them the memory of the circumstances that had caused their flight; and ever and anon, as something occurred to

provoke her suspicions, Mrs. Rosewarne would break out again into a passion of jealousy, and demand explanations and reassurances, which her husband half-indolently and half-sulkily refused. There was but one hand then—one voice that could still the raging waters. Wenna Rosewarne knew nothing of that Devonshire story, any more than her sister or the neighbours did; but she saw that her mother had defects of temper, that she was irritable, unreasonable, and suspicious, and she saw that her father was inconsiderately indifferent and harsh. It was a hard task to reconcile these two; but the girl had all the patience of a born peacemaker: and patience is the more necessary to the settlement of such a dispute, in that it is generally impossible for any human being, outside the two who are quarrelling, to discover any ground for the quarrel.

“Why, what’s the matter, mother?”

she said on this occasion, taking off her hat and shawl as if she had heard nothing about it. "I do think you have been crying."

The pretty, pale woman, with the large black eyes and smoothly-brushed dark hair, threw a volume on to the table, and said, with a sort of half-hysterical laugh, "How stupid it is, Wenna, to cry over the misfortunes of people in books, isn't it?"

That pretence would not have deceived Miss Wenna in any case, but now she was to receive other testimony to the truth of Mr. Trelyon's report. There was seated at the window of the room a tall and strikingly handsome young girl of sixteen, whose almost perfect profile was clearly seen against the light. Just at this moment she rose and stepped across the room to the door, and as she went by she said, with just a trace of contemptuous indifference on the proud and beautiful face, "It is only another quarrel, Wenna."

“Mother,” said the girl, when her sister had gone, “tell me what it is about. What have you said to father? Where is he?”

There was an air of quiet decision about her that did not detract from the sympathy visible in her face. Mrs. Rosewarne began to cry again. Then she took her daughter’s hand, and made her sit down by her, and told her all her troubles. What was the girl to make of it? It was the old story of suspicion, and challenging, and sulky denial, and then hot words and anger. She could make out, at least, that her mother had first been made anxious about something he had inadvertently said about his visit to Plymouth on the previous two days. In reply to her questions he had grown peevishly vague, and had then spoken in bravado of the pleasant evening he had spent at the theatre. Wenna reasoned with her mother, and pleaded with her, and at last exercised a little authority over her; at

the end of which she agreed that, if her husband would tell her with whom he had been to the theatre, she would be satisfied, would speak no more on the subject, and would even formally beg his forgiveness.

“ Because, mother, I have something to tell you,” the daughter said, “ when you are all quite reconciled.”

“ Was it in the letter you read just now? ”

“ Yes, mother.”

The girl still held the letter in her hand. It was lying on the table when she came in, but she had not opened it and glanced over the contents until she saw that her mother was yielding to her prayers.

“ It is from Mr. Roscorla, Wennä,” the mother said; and now she saw, as she might have seen before, that her daughter was a little paler than usual, and somewhat agitated.

“ Yes, mother.”

“What is it, then? You look frightened.”

“I must settle this matter first,” said the girl, calmly; and then she folded up the letter, and, still holding it in her hand, went off to find her father.

George Rosewarne, seeking calm after the storm, was seated on a large and curiously carved bench of Spanish oak placed by the door of the inn. He was smoking his pipe, and lazily looking at some pigeons that were flying about the mill and occasionally alighting on the roof. In the calm of the midsummer's day there was no sound but the incessant throbbing of the big wheel over there and the splash of the water.

“Now, don't bother me, Wenna,” he said, the moment he saw her approach. “I know you've come to make a fuss. You mind your own business.”

“Mother is very sorry——” the girl was

beginning in a meek way, when he interrupted her rudely.

“I tell you to mind your own business. I must have an end of this. I have stood it long enough. Do you hear?”

But she did not go away. She stood there, with her quiet, patient face, not heeding his angry looks.

“Father, don’t be hard on her. She is very sorry. She is willing to beg your pardon if you will only tell her who went to the theatre with you at Plymouth, and relieve her from this anxiety. This is all. Father, who went to the theatre with you?”

“Oh, go away!” he said, relapsing into a sulky condition. “You’re growing up to be just such another as your mother.”

“I cannot wish for anything better,” the girl said, mildly. “She is a good woman, and she loves you dearly.”

“Why,” he said, turning suddenly upon

her, and speaking in an injured way, "no one went with me to the theatre at Plymouth! Did I say that anybody did? Surely a man must do something to spend the evening if he is by himself in a strange town."

Wenna put her hand on her father's shoulder, and said, "Da, why didn't you take me to Plymouth?"

"Well, I will next time. You're a good lass," he said, still in the same sulky way.

"Now come in and make it up with mother. She is anxious to make it up."

He looked at his pipe.

"In a few minutes, Wenna. When I finish my pipe."

"She is waiting now," said the girl, quietly; and with that her father burst into a loud laugh, and got up and shrugged his shoulders; and then, taking his daughter by the ear, and saying that she was a sly

little cat, he walked into the house and into the room where his wife awaited him.

Meanwhile, Wemma Rosewarne had stolen off to her own little room, and there she sat down at the window, and with trembling fingers took out a letter and began to read it. It was certainly a document of some length, consisting, indeed, of four large pages of blue paper, covered with a small, neat, and precise handwriting. She had not got on very far with it, when the door of the room was opened, and Mrs. Rosewarne appeared, the pale face and large dark eyes being now filled with a radiant pleasure. Her husband had said something friendly to her; and the quick, imaginative nature had leapt to the conclusion that all was right again, and that there were to be no more needless quarrels.

“And now, Wemma,” she said, sitting down by the girl, “what is it all about?”

and why did you look so frightened a few minutes ago ? ”

“ Oh, mother ! ” the girl said, “ this is a letter from Mr. Roscorla, and he wants me to marry him. ”

“ Mr. Roscorla ! ” cried the mother, in blank astonishment. “ Who ever dreamed of such a thing ? and what do you say, Wenna ? What do you think ? What answer will you send him ? Dear me, to think of Mr. Roscorla taking a wife, and wanting to have our Wenna, too ! ”

She began to tell her mother something of the letter, reading it carefully to herself, and then repeating aloud some brief suggestion of what she had read, to let her mother know what were the arguments that Mr. Roscorla employed. And it was, on the whole, an argumentative letter, and much more calm, and lucid, and reasonable than most letters are which contain offers of marriage. Mr. Roscorla wrote thus :

“Basset Cottage, Eglosilyn, July 18, 18—.

“MY DEAR MISS WENNA,

“I fear that this letter may surprise you, but I hope you will read it through without alarm or indignation, and deal fairly and kindly with what it has to say. Perhaps you will think, when you have read it, that I ought to have come to you and said the things that it says. But I wish to put these things before you in as simple a manner as I can, which is best done by writing; and a letter will have this advantage, that you can recur to it at any moment, if there is some point on which you are in doubt.

“The object, then, of this letter is to ask you to become my wife, and to put before you a few considerations which I hope will have some little influence in determining your answer. You will be surprised, no doubt; for though you must be well aware that I could perceive the graces of your character—the gentleness and charity of

heart, and modesty of demeanour, that have endeared you to the whole of the people among whom you live—you may fairly say that I never betrayed my admiration of you in word or deed; and that is true. I cannot precisely tell you why I should be more distant in manner towards her whom I preferred to all the world than to her immediate friends and associates for whom I cared much less; but such is the fact. I could talk, and joke, and spend a pleasant afternoon in the society of your sister Mabyn, for example; I could ask her to accept a present from me; I could write letters to her when I was in London; but with you all that was different. Perhaps it is because you are so fine and shy, because there is so much sensitiveness in your look, that I have almost been afraid to go near you, lest you should shrink from some rude intimation of that which I now

endeavour to break to you gently—my wish and earnest hope that you may become my wife. I trust I have so far explained what perhaps you may have considered coldness on my part.

“I am a good deal older than you are; and I cannot pretend to offer you that fervid passion which, to the imagination of the young, seems the only thing worth living for, and one of the necessary conditions of marriage. On the other hand, I cannot expect the manifestation of any such passion on your side, even if I had any wish for it. But on this point I should like to make a few observations which I hope will convince you that my proposal is not so unreasonable as it may have seemed at first sight. When I look over the list of all my friends who have married, whom do I find to be living the happiest life? Not they who as boy and girl were carried away by a romantic

idealism which seldom lasts beyond a few weeks after marriage, but those who had wisely chosen partners fitted to become their constant and affectionate friends. It is this possibility of friendship, indeed, which is the very basis of a happy marriage. The romance and passion of love soon depart; then the man and woman find themselves living in the same house, dependent on each other's character, intelligence, and disposition, and bound by inexorable ties. If, in these circumstances, they can be good friends, it is well with them. If they admire each other's thoughts and feelings, if they are generously considerate towards each other's weaknesses, if they have pleasure in each other's society—if, in short, they find themselves bound to each other by the ties of a true and disinterested friendship, the world has been good to them. I say nothing against that period of passion which, in some rare and fortunate

instances, precedes this infinitely longer period of friendship. You would accuse me of the envy of an elderly man if I denied that it has its romantic aspects. But how very temporary these are! How dangerous they are too! The passion of a young man, as I have seen it displayed in a thousand instances, is not a thing to be desired. It is cruel in its jealousy, exacting in its demands, heedless in its impetuosity; and when it has burned itself out—when nothing remains but ashes and an empty fireplace—who is to say that the capacity for a firm and lasting friendship will survive? But perhaps you fancy that this passionate love may last for ever. Will you forgive me, dear Miss Wenna, if I say that that is the dream of a girl? In such rare cases as I have seen, this perpetual ardour of love was anything but a happiness to those concerned. The freaks of jealousy on the part of a boy and girl who

think of getting married are but occasions for the making of quarrels and the delight of reconciliation; but a life-long jealousy involves a torture to both husband and wife to which death would be preferable."

At this point Wenna's cheeks burned red; she was silent for a time, and her mother wondered why she skipped so long a passage without saying a word.

"I have used all the opportunities within my reach," the letter continued, "to form a judgment of your character; I know something of my own; and I sincerely believe that we could live a happy and pleasant life together. It is a great sacrifice I ask of you, I own; but you would not find me slow to repay you in gratitude. I am almost alone in the world; the few relatives I have I never see; I have scarcely a friend or acquaintance except those I meet under your father's hospitable roof. I cannot conceal from myself that I should be by far the

greater gainer by such a marriage : I should secure for myself a pleasant, intelligent, and amiable companion, who would brighten my home, and in time, I doubt not, soften and sweeten those views of the world that are naturally formed by a middle-aged man living alone and in privacy. What can I offer you in return? Not much—except the opportunity of adding one more to the many good deeds that seem to be the chief occupation of your life. And I should be glad if you would let me help you in that way, and give you the aid of advice which might, perhaps, temper your generosity and apply it to its best uses. You are aware that I have no occupation—and scarcely a hobby; I should make it my occupation, my constant endeavour and pleasure, to win and secure your affection—to make the ordinary little cares and duties of life, in which you take so great an interest, smooth and pleasant to you. In short, I should try to make you

happy ; not in any frantic and wild way, but by the exercise of a care, and affection, and guardianship by which I hope we should both profit. May I point out, also, that, as a married woman, you would have much more influence among the poorer families in the village who take up so much of your attention ; and you would be removed, too, if I may mention such a thing, from certain unhappy circumstances which I fear trouble you greatly at times. But perhaps I should not have referred to this ; I would rather seek to press my claim on the ground of the happiness you would thereby confer on others, which I know to be your chief object in life.

“ I have not said half what I intended to say ; but I must not fatigue you. Perhaps you will give me an opportunity of telling you personally what I think of yourself, for I cannot bring myself to write it in bald words ; and if you should be in doubt, give

me the benefit of the doubt, and let me explain. I do not ask you for a hurried answer; but I should be glad if, out of the kindness of all your ways, you would send me one line soon, merely to say that I have not offended you.

“I am, my dear Miss Rosewarne,

“Yours most sincerely,

“RICHARD ROSCORLA.”

“Oh! what must I do, mother?” the girl cried. “Is it all true that he says?”

“My dear child, there is a great deal of common sense in the letter,” the mother replied, calmly; “but you needn’t decide all at once. Take plenty of time. I suppose you don’t dislike Mr. Roscorla?”

“Oh, not at all—not at all! But then, to marry him——!”

“If you don’t wish to marry him, no harm is done,” Mrs. Rosewarne said. “I cannot advise you, Wenna. Your own

feelings must settle the question. But you ought to be very proud of the offer, any way; and you must thank him properly; for Mr. Roscorla is a gentleman, although he is not as rich as his relations; and it is a great honour he has done you. Of course, Wenna, if you were in love with any one—if there was any young man about here whom you would like to marry—there would be no need for you to be frightened about what Mr. Roscorla says of young folks being in love. It is a trying time, to be sure. It has many troubles. Perhaps, after all, a quiet and peaceful life is better, especially for you, Wenna, for you were always quiet and peaceful, and if any trouble came over you it would break your heart. I think it would be better for you if you were never tried in that way, Wenna.”

The girl rose, with a sigh.

“Not that it is my advice, Wenna,” said the mother anxiously. “But you are of

that nature, you see. If you were in love with a young man, you would be his slave. If he ceased to care for you, or were cruel to you, it would kill you, my dear. Well, you see, here is a man who would be able to take care of you, and of your sister Mabyn, too, if anything happened to your father or me; and he would make much of you, I have no doubt, and be very kind to you. You are not like other girls, Wenna——”

“I know that, mother,” said the girl, with a strange sort of smile that just trembled on the verge of tears. “They can’t all be as plain as I am.”

“Oh, I don’t mean that! You make a great mistake if you think that men only care for doll-faces—as Mr. Roscorla says, that fancy does not last long after marriage, and then men begin to ask whether their wives are clever, and amusing, and well-informed, and so on. What I meant was, that most girls could run the gauntlet of

that sort of love that Mr. Roscorla describes, and suffer little if they made a mistake. But there's no shell about you, Wenna. You are quite undefended, sensitive, and timid. People are deceived by your quick wit, and your cheerfulness, and your singing. I know better. I know that a careless word may cut you deeply. And dear, dear me, what a terrible time that is when all your life seems to hang on the way a word is spoken ! ”

The girl crossed over to a small side-table, on which there was a writing-desk.

“ But mind, Wenna,” said her mother, with a return of anxiety, “ mind, I don't say that to influence your decision. Don't be influenced by me. Consult your own feelings, dear. You know I fancy sometimes you undervalue yourself, and think that no one cares about you, and that you have no claim to be thought much of. Well, that is a great mistake, Wenna. You must not

throw yourself away through that notion. I wish all the girls about were as clever and good-natured as you. But at the same time, you know, there are few girls I know, and certainly none about here, who would consider it throwing themselves away to marry Mr. Roscorla."

"*Marry Mr. Roscorla!*" a third voice exclaimed; and at the same moment Mabyu Rosewarne entered the room.

She looked at her mother and sister with astonishment. She saw that Wenna was writing, and that she was very pale. She saw a blue-coloured letter lying beside her. Then the proud young beauty understood the situation; and with her to perceive a thing was to act on its suggestion there and then.

"Our Wenna! Marry that old man! Oh, mother! how can you let her do such a thing?"

She walked right over to the small table,

with a glow of indignation in her face, and with her lips set firm, and her eyes full of fire ; and then she caught up the letter, that had scarcely been begun, and tore it in a thousand pieces, and flung the pieces on the floor.

“ Oh, mother ! how could you let her do it ! Mr. Roscorla marry our Wenna ! ”

She took two or three steps up and down the room, in a pretty passion of indignation, and yet trying to keep her proud eyes free from tears.

“ Mother, if you do I’ll go into a convent ! I’ll go to sea, and never come back again ! I won’t stop in the house—not one minute—if Wenna goes away ! ”

“ My dear child,” said the mother, patiently, “ it is not my doing. You must not be so rash. Mr. Roscorla is not an old man—nothing of the sort ; and, if he does offer to marry Wenna, it is a great honour done to her, I think. She ought to be very

grateful, as I hope you will be, Mabyn, when any one offers to marry you——”

Miss Mabyn drew herself up; and her pretty mouth lost none of its scorn.

“And as for Wenna,” the mother said, “she must judge for herself——”

“Oh, but she’s not fit to judge for herself!” broke in the younger sister impetuously. “She will do anything that anybody wants. She would make herself the slave of anybody. She is always being imposed on. Just wait a moment, and *I* will answer Mr. Roscorla’s letter!”

She walked over to the table again, twisted round the writing-desk, and quickly pulled in a chair. You would have thought that the pale, dark-eyed little girl on the other side of the table had no will of her own—that she was in the habit of obeying this beautiful young termagant of a sister of hers; but Miss Mabyn’s bursts of impetuosity were no match for the gentle

firmness and patience that were invariably opposed to them. In this instance Mr. Roscorla was not to be the recipient of a letter which doubtless would have astonished him.

“Mabyn,” said her sister Wenna, quietly, “don’t be foolish. I must write to Mr. Roscorla—but only to tell him that I have received his letter. Give me the pen. And will you go and ask Mrs. Borlase if she can spare me Jennifer for a quarter of an hour, to go up to Basset Cottage?”

Mabyn rose, silent, disappointed, and obedient, but not subdued. She went off to execute the errand; but as she went she said to herself, with her head very erect, “Before Mr. Roscorla marries our Wenna, I will have a word to say to him.”

Meanwhile Wenna Rosewarne, apparently quite calm, but with her hand trembling so that she could hardly hold the pen, wrote her first love-letter; and it ran thus:—

“Trelyon Arms, Tuesday Afternoon.”

“DEAR MR. ROSCORLA,

“I have received your letter, and you must not think me offended. I will try to send you an answer to-morrow; or perhaps the day after, or perhaps on Friday; I will try to send you an answer to your letter.

“I am yours sincerely,

“WENNA ROSEWARNE.”

She took it timidly to her mother, who smiled, and said it was a little incoherent.

“But I cannot write it again, mother,” the girl said. “Will you give it to Jennifer when she comes?”

Little did Miss Wenna notice of the beautiful golden afternoon that was shining over Eglosilyan as she left the inn and stole away out to the rocks at the mouth of the little harbour. She spoke to her many acquaintances as she passed, and could not have told a minute thereafter

that she had seen them. She said a word or two to the coastguardsman out at the point—an old friend of hers—and then she went round to the seaward side of the rocks, and sat down to think the whole matter over. The sea was as still as a sea in a dream. There was but one ship visible, away down in the south, a brown speck in a flood of golden haze.

When the first startled feeling was over—when she had recovered from the absolute fright that so sudden a proposal had caused her—something of pride and pleasure crept into her heart to know that she was not quite the insignificant person she had fancied herself to be. Was it true, then, what he had said about her being of some use to the people around her? Did they really care for her? Had she really won the respect and approval of a man who had hitherto seemed to her suspicious and censorious?

There flashed upon her some faint picture of herself as a matron, and she found herself blushing to think of herself going round the cottages as Mrs. Roscorla, and acting the part of a little married woman. If marriage meant no more than that, she was not afraid of it; on the contrary, the prospect rather pleased her. These were duties she could understand. Marriage, in those idle day-dreams of hers, had seemed to her some vague, and distant, and awful thing; all the romance, and worship, and noble self-surrender of it being far away from a poor little plain person, not capable of inspiring idealism in anybody. But this, on the other hand, seemed easily within her reach. She became rather amused with the picture of herself which she drew as Mrs. Roscorla. Her quick fancy put in humorous touches here and there, until she found herself pretty nearly laughing at herself as a tiny

married woman. For what did the frank-spoken heroine of that sailor-ballad say to her lover? If he would be faithful and kind,

Nor your Molly forsake.

Still your trousers I'll wash, and your grog, too, I'll make.

As for his grog, would she mix the proper quantities, as they sat together of an evening, by themselves, in that little parlour up at Basset Cottage? And would she have to take his arm as they walked of a Sunday morning to church, up the main street of Eglosilyan, where all her old friends, the children, would be looking at her? And would she some day, with all the airs and counsels of a married woman, have to take Mabyn to her arms, and bid the younger sister have confidence, and listen to all the story of Mabyn's wonder and delight over the new and strange love that had come into her heart? And would she ask Mabyn to describe her lover; and would she act the ordinary part of an

experienced adviser, and bid her be cautious, and ask her to wait until the young man had made a position in the world, and had proved himself prudent and sensible, and of steady mind? Or would she not rather fling her arms round her sister's neck, and bid her go down on her knees and thank God for having made her so beautiful, and bid her cherish as the one good thing in all the world the strong and yearning love and admiration and worship of a young and wondering soul?

Wenna Rosewarne had been amusing herself with these pictures of herself as a married woman; but she was crying all the same; and becoming a little impatient with herself, and perhaps a trifle hysterical, she rose from the rocks and thought she would go home again. She had scarcely turned, however, when she met Mr. Roscorla himself, who had seen her at a distance, and followed her.

CHAPTER IV.

THE LAST LOOK BACK.

MR. ROSCORLA may be recommended to ladies generally, and to married men who are haunted by certain vague and vain regrets, as an excellent example of the evils and vanity of club-life. He was now a man approaching fifty, careful in dress and manner, methodical in habit, and grave of aspect, living out a not over-enjoyable life in a solitary little cottage, and content to go for his society to the good folks of the village inn. But five-and-twenty years before he had been a gay young fellow about town, a pretty general favourite, clever in his way, free with his money, and possessed of excellent spirits. He was not

very wealthy, to be sure ; his father had left him certain shares in some plantations in Jamaica, but the returns periodically forwarded to him by his agents were sufficient for his immediate wants. He had few cares, and he seemed on the whole to have a pleasant time of it. On disengaged evenings he lounged about his club, and dined with one or other of the men he knew, and then he played billiards till bed-time. Or he would have nice little dinner-parties at his rooms ; and, after the men had changed their coats, would have a few games at whist, perhaps finishing up with a little spurt of unlimited loo. In the season he went to balls, and dinners, and parties of all sorts, singling out a few families with pretty daughters for his special attentions, but careful never to commit himself. When every one went from town he went too, and in the autumn and winter months he had a fair amount of shooting and

hunting, guns and horses alike and willingly furnished him by his friends.

Once, indeed, he had taken a fancy that he ought to do something, and he went and read law a bit, and ate some dinners, and got called to the Bar. He even went the length of going on Circuit; but either he travelled by coach, or fraternized with a solicitor, or did something objectionable; at all events his circuit mess fined him: he refused to pay the fine, threw the whole thing up, and returned to his club, and its carefully-ordered dinners, and its friendly game of sixpenny and eighteen-penny pool.

Of course he dressed, and acted, and spoke just as his fellows did, and gradually from the common talk of smoking-rooms imbibed a vast amount of nonsense. He knew that such and such a statesman professed particular opinions only to keep in place and enjoy the loaves and fishes. He could tell you to a penny the bribe

given to the editor of the *Times* by a foreign Government for a certain series of articles. As for the stories he heard and repeated of all manner of noble families, they were many of them doubtless true, and they were nearly all unpleasant; but then the tale that would have been regarded with indifference if told about an ordinary person, grew lambent with interest when it was told about a commonplace woman possessed of a shire and a gaby crowned with a coronet. There was no malice in these stories; only the young men were supposed to know everything about the private affairs of a certain number of families no more nearly related to them than their washerwoman.

He was unfortunate, too, in a few personal experiences. He was a fairly well-intentioned young man; and, going home one night, was moved to pity by the sobbing and exclamations of a little girl of twelve,

whose mother was drunk and tumbling about the pavement. The child could not get her mother to go home, and it was now past midnight. Richard Roscorla thought he would interfere, and went over the way and helped the woman to her feet. He had scarcely done so when the virago turned on him, shouted for help, accused him of assaulting her, and finally hit him straight between the eyes, nearly blinding him, and causing him to keep his chambers for three weeks. After that he gave up the lower classes.

Then a gentleman who had been his bosom friend at Eton, and who had carried away with him so little of the atmosphere of that institution that he by-and-by abandoned himself to trade, renewed his acquaintance with Mr. Roscorla, and besought him to join him in a little business transaction. He only wanted a few thousand pounds to secure the success of a

venture that would make both their fortunes. Young Roscorla hesitated. Then his friend sent his wife, an exceedingly pretty woman, and she pleaded with such sweetness and pathos that she actually carried away a cheque for the amount in her beautiful little purse. A couple of days afterwards Mr. Roscorla discovered that his friend had suddenly left the country; that he had induced a good many people to lend him money to start his new enterprise; and that the beautiful lady whom he had sent to plead his cause was a wife certainly, but not his wife. She was, in fact, the wife of one of the swindled creditors, who bore her loss with greater equanimity than he showed in speaking of his departed money. Young Roscorla laughed, and said to himself that a man who wished to have any knowledge of the world must be prepared to pay for it.

The loss of the money, though it

pressed him hardly for a few years, and gave a fright to his father's executors, did not trouble him much: for, in company with a good many of the young fellows about, he had given himself up to one of the most pleasing delusions which even club-life has fostered. It was the belief of those young men that in England there are a vast number of young ladies of fortune who are so exceedingly anxious to get married, that any decent young fellow of fair appearance and good manners has only to bide his time in order to be provided for for life. Accordingly Mr. Roscorla and others of his particular set were in no hurry to take a wife. They waited to see who would bid most for them. They were not in want; they could have maintained a wife in a certain fashion; but that was not the fashion in which they hoped to spend the rest of their days, when they consented to relinquish the joys and freedom of

bachelorhood. Most of them, indeed, had so thoroughly settled in their own mind the sort of existence to which they were entitled—the house, and horses, and shooting necessary to them—that it was impossible for them to consider any lesser offer; and so they waited from year to year, guarding themselves against temptation, cultivating an excellent taste in various sorts of luxuries, and reserving themselves for the *grand coup* which was to make their fortune. In many cases they looked upon themselves as the victims of the world. They had been deceived by this or the other woman; but now they had done with the fatal passion of love, its dangerous perplexities, and insincere romance; and were resolved to take a sound common-sense view of life. So they waited carelessly, and enjoyed their time, growing in wisdom of a certain sort. They were gentlemanly young fellows enough; they

would not have done a dishonourable action for the world; they were well-bred, and would have said no discourteous thing to the woman they married, even though they hated her; they had their cold bath every morning; they lived soberly, if not very righteously; and would not have asked ten points at billiards if they fairly thought they could have played even. The only thing was that they had changed their sex. They were not Perseus, but Andromeda; and while this poor masculine Andromeda remained chained to the rock of an imaginary poverty, the feminine Perseus who was to come in a blaze of jewels and gold to the rescue, still remained afar off, until Andromeda got a little tired.

And so it was with Mr. Richard Roscorla. He lounged about his club, and had nice little dinners; he went to other people's houses, and dined there; with his crush-hat under his arm he went to many

a dance, and made such acquaintances as he might; but somehow that one supreme chance invariably missed. He did not notice it, any more than his fellows. If you had asked any of them, they would still have given you those devil-may-care opinions about women, and those shrewd estimates of what was worth living for in the world. They did not seem to be aware that year after year was going by, and that a new race of younger men were coming to the front, eager for all sorts of pastimes, ready to dance till daybreak, and defying with their splendid constitutions the worst champagne a confectioner ever brewed. A man who takes good care of himself is slow to believe that he is growing middle-aged. If the sitting up all night to play loo does him an injury such as he would not have experienced a few years before, he lays the blame of it on the brandy-and-soda. When two or three

hours over wet turnips make his knees feel queer, he vows that he is in bad condition, but that a few days' exercise will set him right. It was a long time before Mr. Richard Roscorla would admit to himself that his hair was growing grey. By this time many of his old friends and associates had left the club. Some had died; some had made the best of a bad bargain, and married a plain country cousin; none, to tell the truth, had been rescued by the beautiful heiress for whom they had all been previously waiting. And while these men went away, and while new men came into the club—young fellows with fresh complexions, abundant spirits, a lavish disregard of money, and an amazing enjoyment in drinking any sort of wine—another set of circumstances came into play which rendered it more and more necessary for Mr. Roscorla to change his ways of life.

He was now over forty; his hair was grey; his companions were mostly older men than himself: and he began to be rather pressed for money. The merchants in London who sold for his agents in Jamaica those consignments of sugar and rum, sent him every few months statements which showed that either the estates were yielding less, or the markets had fallen, or labour had risen—whatever it might be, his annual income was very seriously impaired. He could no longer afford to play half-crown points at whist: even sixpenny pool was dangerous; and those boxes and stalls which it was once his privilege to take for dowagers gifted with daughters, were altogether out of the question. The rent of his rooms in Jermyn Street was a serious matter; all his little economies at the club were of little avail; at last he resolved to leave London. And then it was that he bethought him of living permanently at this

cottage at Eglosilyan, which had belonged to his grandfather, and which he had visited from time to time during the summer months. He would continue his club-subscription; he would still correspond with certain of his friends; he would occasionally pay a flying visit to London; and down here by the Cornish coast he would live a healthy, economical, contented life.

So he came to Eglosilyan, and took up his abode in the plain white cottage placed amid birch-trees on the side of the hill, and set about providing himself with amusement. He had a good many books, and he read at night over his final pipe; he made friends with the fishermen, and often went out with them; he took a little interest in wild plants; and he rode a sturdy little pony by way of exercise. He was known to the Trelyons, to the clergymen of the neighbourhood, and to one or two families living farther off; but he did not dine out

much, for he could not well invite his host to dinner in return. His chief friends, indeed, were the Rosewarnes; and scarcely a day passed that he did not call at the inn and have a chat with George Rosewarne; or with his wife and daughters. For the rest, Mr. Roscorla was a small man, sparely built, with somewhat fresh complexion, close-cropped grey hair and iron-grey whiskers. He dressed very neatly and methodically; he was fairly light and active in his walk; and he had a grave, good-natured smile. He was much improved in constitution, indeed, since he came to Eglosilyan; for that was not a place to let any one die of languor, or to encourage complexions of the colour of apple-pudding. Mr. Roscorla, indeed, had the appearance of a pleasant little country lawyer, somewhat finical in dress and grave in manner, and occasionally just a trifle supercilious and cutting in his speech.

He had received Wenna Rosewarne's brief and hurriedly-written note; and if accident had not thrown her in his way, he would doubtless have granted her that time for reflection which she demanded. But happening to be out, he saw her go down towards the rocks beyond the harbour. She had a pretty figure, and she walked gracefully; when he saw her at a distance some little flutter of anxiety disturbed his heart. That glimpse of her—the possibility of securing as his constant companion a girl who walked so daintily and dressed so neatly—added some little warmth of feeling to the wish he had carefully reasoned out and expressed. For the offer he had sent to Miss Wenna was the result of much calculation. He was half aware that he had let his youth slip by and idled away his opportunities; there was now no chance of his engaging in any profession or pursuit; there was little chance of his bettering his

condition by a rich marriage. What could he now offer to a beautiful young creature possessed of fortune, such as he had often looked out for, in return for herself and her money? Not his grey hairs, and his asthmatic evenings in winter, and the fixed, and narrow, and oftentimes selfish habits and opinions begotten of a solitary life. Here, on the other hand, was a young lady of pleasing manners and honest nature, and of humble wishes as became her station, whom he might induce to marry him. She had scarcely ever moved out of the small circle around her; and in it were no possible lovers for her. If he did not marry her, she might drift into as hopeless a position as his own. If she consented to marry him, would they not be able to live in a friendly way together, gradually winning each other's sympathy, and making the world a little more sociable and comfortable for both? There was no chance

of his going back to the brilliant society in which he had once moved ; for there was no one whom he could expect to die and leave him any money. When he went up to town and spent an evening or two at his club, he found himself almost wholly among strangers ; and he could not get that satisfaction out of a solitary dinner that once was his. He returned to his cottage at Eglosilyan with some degree of resignation ; and fancied he could live well enough there if Wenna Rosewarne would only come to relieve him from its frightful loneliness.

He blushed when he went forward to her on these rocks, and was exceedingly embarrassed, and could scarcely look her in the face as he begged her pardon for intruding on her, and hoped she would resume her seat. She was a little pale, and would have liked to get away, but was probably so frightened that she did not know how to take the step. Without a word, she sat

down again, her heart beating as if it would suffocate her. Then there was a terrible pause.

Mr. Roscorla discovered at this moment—and the shock almost bewildered him—that he would have to play the part of a lover. He had left that out of the question. He had found it easy to dissociate love from marriage in writing a letter; in fact he had written it mainly to get over the necessity of shamming sentiment; but here was a young and sensitive girl, probably with a good deal of romantic nonsense in her head, and he was going to ask her to marry him. And just at this moment, also, a terrible recollection flashed in on his mind of Wenna Rosewarne's liking for humour, and of the merry light he had often seen in her eyes, however demure her manner might be; and then it occurred to him that if he did play the lover, she would know that he knew he was making a fool of himself,

and laugh at him in the safe concealment of her own room.

“Of course,” he said, making a sudden plunge, followed by a gasp or two—“Of course—Miss Wenna—of course you were surprised to get my letter—a letter containing an offer of marriage, and almost nothing about affection in it. Well, there are some things one can neither write nor say—they have so often been the subject of good-natured ridicule that, that——”

“I think one forgets that,” Wenna said timidly, “if one is in earnest about anything.”

“Miss Wenna,” he said, “you know I find it very difficult to say what I should like to say. That letter did not tell you half—probably you thought it too dry and business-like. But at all events you were not offended?”

“Oh no,” she said, wondering how she could get away, and whether a precipitate

plunge into the sea below her would not be the simplest plan. Her head, she felt, was growing giddy, and she began to hear snatches of "Wapping Old Stairs" in the roar of the waves around her.

But he continued to talk to her, insisting on much he had said in his letter, and that with a perfect faith in its truth. So far as his own experience went, the hot-headed romanticism of youth had only led to mischief. Then the mere fact that she allowed him to talk was everything; a point was gained in that she had not straightway sent him off.

Incidentally he spoke of her charitable labours among the poorer folks of Eglosilyan; and here he speedily saw he had got an opening, and he made use of it dexterously. For Miss Wemma's weak side was a great distrust of herself, and a longing to be assured that she was cared for by anybody, and of some little account in the world. To

tell her that the people of Eglosilyan were without exception fond of her, and ready at all moments to say kind things of her, was the sweetest flattery to her ears. Mr. Roscorla easily perceived this, and made excellent use of his discovery. If she did not quite believe all that she heard, she was secretly delighted to hear it. It hinted at the possible realization of all her dreams, even though she could never be beautiful, rich, and of noble presence. Wenna's heart rather inclined to her companion just then. He seemed to her to be a connecting link between her and her manifold friends in Eglosilyan; for how had he heard those things, which she had not heard, if he were not in general communication with them? He seemed to her, too, a friendly counsellor on whom she could rely; he was the very first, indeed, who had ever offered to help her in her work.

“It is far more a matter of intention

than of temper," he continued, speaking in a roundabout way of marriage. "When once two people find out the good qualities in each other, they should fix their faith on those, and let the others be overlooked as much as possible. But I don't think there is much to be feared from your temper, Miss Wenna; and as for mine—I suppose I get vexed sometimes, like other people, but I don't think I am bad-tempered, and I am sure I should never be bad-tempered to you. I don't think I should readily forget what I owe you for taking pity on a solitary old fellow like myself, if I can only persuade you to do that, and for being content to live a humdrum life up in that small cottage. By the way, do you like riding, Wenna? Has your father got a lady's saddle?"

The question startled her so that the blood rushed to her face in a moment, and she could not answer. Was it not that

very morning that she had been asked almost the same question by Mr. Trelyon? And while she was dreamily looking at an imaginative picture of her future life, calm and placid and commonplace, the sudden introduction into it of Harry Trelyon almost frightened her. The mere recalling of his name, indeed, shattered that magic-lantern slide, and took her back to their parting of the forenoon, when he left her in something of an angry fashion; or rather it took her still further back—to one bright summer morning on which she had met young Trelyon riding over the downs to St. Gennis. We all of us know how apt the mind is to retain one particular impression of a friend's appearance, sometimes even in the matter of dress and occupation. When we recall such and such a person, we think of a particular smile, a particular look; perhaps one particular incident of his or her life. Whenever Wenna Rosewarne

thought of Mr. Trelyon, she thought of him as she saw him on that one morning. She was coming along the rough path that crosses the bare uplands by the sea; he was riding by another path some little distance off, and did not notice her. The boy was riding hard; the sunlight was on his face; he was singing aloud some song about the Cavaliers and King Charles. Two or three years had come and gone since then. She had seen Master Harry in many a mood, and not unfrequently ill-tempered; but whenever she thought of him suddenly, her memory presented her with that picture; and it was the picture of a handsome English lad riding by on a summer morning, singing a brave song, and with all the light of youth, and hope, and courage shining on his face.

She rose quickly, and with a sigh, as if she had been dreaming for a time, and forgetting for a moment the sadness of the world.

“Oh, you asked about a saddle,” she said in a matter-of-fact way. “Yes, I think my father has one. I think I must be going home now, Mr. Roscorla.”

“No, not yet,” he said in a pleading way. “Give me a few more minutes. I mayn’t have another chance before you make up your mind; and then, when that is done, I suppose it is all over, so far as persuasion goes. What I am most anxious about is that you should believe there is more affection in my offer than I have actually conveyed in words. Don’t imagine it is merely a commonplace bargain I want you to enter into. I hope, indeed, that in time I shall win from you something warmer than affection, if only you give me the chance. Now, Wenna, won’t you give me some word of assurance—some hint that it may come all right?”

She stood before him, with her eyes cast down, and remained silent for what seemed

to him a strangely long time. Was she bidding good-bye to all the romantic dreams of her youth—to that craving in a girl's heart for some firm and sure ideal of manly love, and courage, and devotion to which she can cling through good report and bad report? Was she reconciling herself to the plain and common ways of the married life placed before her? She said at length, in a low voice :

“You won't ask me to leave Eglosilyan?”

“Certainly not,” he said, eagerly. “And you will see how I will try to join you in all your work there, and how much easier and pleasanter it will be for you, and how much more satisfactory for all the people around you.”

She put out her hand timidly, her eyes still cast down.

“You will be my wife, Wenna?”

“Yes,” she said.

Mr. Roscorla was conscious that he

ought at this high moment in a man's life to experience a strange thrill of happiness. He almost waited for it ; but he felt instead a very distinct sense of embarrassment in not knowing what to do or say next. He supposed that he ought to kiss her, but he dared not. As he himself had said, Wenna Rosewarne was so fine and shy that he shrank from wounding her extreme sensitiveness ; and to step forward and kiss this quiet and gentle creature, who stood there with her pale face faintly flushed and her eyes averted—why, it was impossible. He had heard of girls, in wild moments of pleasure and persuasion, suddenly raising their tear-filled eyes to their lover's face, and signing away their whole existence with one full, passionate, and yearning kiss. But to steal a kiss from this calm little girl ? He felt he should be acting the part of a jocular ploughboy.

“ Wenna,” he said at length, “ you have

made me very happy. I am sure you will never repent your decision ; at least I shall do my best to make you think you have done right. And, Wenna, I have to dine with the Trelyons on Friday evening ; would you allow me to tell them something of what has happened ? ”

“ The Trelyons ! ” she repeated, looking up in a startled way.

It was of evil omen for this man’s happiness that the mere mention of that word turned this girl, who had just been yielding up her life to him, into a woman as obdurate and unimpressionable as a piece of marble.

“ Mr. Roscorla,” she said, with a certain hard decision of voice, “ I must ask you to give me back that promise I made. I forgot—it was too hurried ; why would you not wait ? ”

He was fairly stupefied.

“ Mr. Roscorla,” she said, with almost

something of petulant impatience in her voice, "you must let me go now; I am quite tired out. I will write to you to-morrow or next day, as I promised."

She passed him and went on, leaving him unable to utter a word of protest. But she had only gone a few steps when she returned, and held out her hand and said—

"I hope I have not offended you? It seems that I must offend everybody now; but I am a little tired, Mr. Roscorla."

There was just the least quiver about her lips; and as all this was a profound mystery to him, he fancied he must have tired her out, and he inwardly called himself a brute.

"My dear Wenna," he said, "you have not offended me—you have not really. It is I who must apologize to you. I am so sorry I should have worried you; it was very

inconsiderate. Pray take your own time about that letter."

So she went away, and passed round to the other side of the rocks, and came in view of the small winding harbour, and the mill, and the inn. Far away up there, over the cliffs, were the downs on which she had met Harry Trelyon that summer morning, as he rode by, singing in the mere joyousness of youth, and happy and pleased with all the world. She could hear the song he was singing then; she could see the sunlight that was shining on his face. It appeared to her to be long ago. This girl was but eighteen years of age, and yet, as she walked down towards Eglosilyan, there was a weight on her heart that seemed to tell her she was growing old.

And now the western sky was red with the sunset, and the rich light burned along the crests of the hills, on the golden furze, the purple heather, and the deep-coloured

rocks. The world seemed all ablaze up there; but down here, as she went by the harbour and crossed over the bridge by the mill, Eglosilyan lay pale and grey in the hollow; and even the great black wheel was silent.

CHAPTER V.

THROWING A FLY.

HARRY TRELYON had a cousin named Juliott Penaluna, who lived at Penzance with her father, an irascible old clergyman, who, while yet a poor curate, had the good fortune to marry Mrs. Trelyon's sister. Miss Juliott was a handsome, healthy, English-looking girl, with blue eyes and brown hair, frank enough in her ways, fairly well-read, fond of riding and driving, and very specially fond of her cousin. There had never been any concealment about that. Master Harry, too, liked his cousin in a way, as he showed by his rudeness to her ;

but he used plainly to tell her that he would not marry her; whereupon she would be angry with him for his impertinence, and end by begging him to be good friends again.

At last she went, as her mother had done before her, and encouraged the attentions of a fair, blue-eyed, pensive young curate, one who was full of beautiful enthusiasms and idealisms, in which he sought to interest the mind of this exceedingly practical young woman, who liked cliff-hunting, and had taught herself to swim in the sea. Just before she pledged her future to him, she wrote to Harry Trelyon, plainly warning him of what was going to happen. In a fashion she asked for his advice. It was a timid letter for her to write, and she even showed some sentiment in it. The reply, written in a coarse, sprawling, schoolboy hand, was as follows :—

“ Trelyon Hall, Monday Afternoon.

“ DEAR JUE,

“ All right. You’re a fool to marry a parson. What would you like for a wedding present ?

“ Affectionately yours,

“ HARRY TRELYON.”

Posts don’t go very fast in Cornwall ; but just as soon as a letter from Penzance could reach him, Master Harry had his answer. And it was this :—

“ The Hollies, Penzance, Wednesday.

“ DEAR HARRY,

“ I am glad to receive a letter from you in which there is no ill-spelling. There is plenty of ill-temper, however, as usual. You may send your wedding presents to those who care for them : I don’t.

“ JULIOTT PENALUNA.”

Master Harry burst into a roar of laughter when he received that letter ;

but, all the same, he could not get his cousin to write him a line for months thereafter. Now, however, she had come to visit some friends at Wadebridge; and she agreed to drive over and join Mrs. Trelyon's little dinner-party, to which Mr. Roscorla had also been invited. Accordingly, in the afternoon, when Harry Trelyon was seated on the stone steps outside the Hall door, engaged in making artificial flies, Miss Penaluna drove up in a tiny chariot drawn by a beautiful little pair of ponies; and when the boy had jumped down and gone to the ponies' heads, and when she had descended from the carriage, Master Harry thought it was time for him to lay aside his silk, rosin, feathers, and what not, and go forward to meet her.

“How are you, Jue?” he said, offering to kiss her, as was his custom; “and where's your young man?”

She drew back, offended ; and then she looked at him, and shrugged her shoulders, and gave him her cheek to kiss. He was only a boy, after all.

“ Well, Harry, I am not going to quarrel with you,” she said, with a good-natured smile ; “ although I suppose I shall have plenty of cause before I go. Are you as rude as ever ? Do you talk as much slang as ever ? ”

“ I like to hear *you* talk of slang ! ” he said. “ Who calls her ponies Brandy and Soda ? Weren’t you wild, Jue, when Captain Tulliver came up and said, ‘ *Miss Penaluna, how are your dear Almonds and Raisins ?* ’ ”

“ If I had given him a cut with my whip, I should have made him dance,” said Miss Juliott, frankly ; “ then he would have forgotten to turn out his toes. Harry, go and see if that boy has taken in my things.”

“ I won’t. There’s plenty of time ; and I want to talk to you. I say, Jue, what made you go and get engaged down in Penzance ? Why didn’t you cast your eye in this direction ? ”

“ Well, of all the impertinent things that I ever heard ! ” said Miss Juliott, very much inclined to box his ears. “ Do you think I ever thought of marrying *you* ! ”

“ Yes, I do,” he said, coolly ; “ and you would throw over that parson in a minute, if I asked you—you know you would, Jue. But I’m not good enough for you.”

“ Indeed, you are not,” she said, with a toss of the head. “ I would take you for a gamekeeper, but not for a husband.”

“ Much need you’ll have of a gamekeeper when you become Mrs. Tressider ! ” said he, with a rude laugh. “ But I didn’t mean myself, Jue. I meant that if you were going to marry a parson, you might have come here and had a choice. We can show you

all sorts at this house—fat and lean, steeples and beer-barrels, bandy-legged and knock-kneed, whichever you like—you'll always find an ample assortment on these elegant premises. The stock is rather low just now, —I think we've only two or three; but you're supplied already, ain't you, Jue? Well, I never expected it of you. You were a good sort of chap at one time; but I suppose you can't climb trees any more now. There, I'll let you go into the house; all the servants are waiting for you. If you see my grandmother, tell her she must sit next me at dinner—if a parson sits next me, I'll kill him."

Just as Miss Juliott passed into the Hall, a tall, fair-haired, gentle-faced woman, dressed wholly in white, and stepping very softly and silently, came down the staircase, so that, in the twilight, she almost appeared to be some angel descending from heaven. She came forward to her visitor with a smile

on the pale and wistful face, and took her hand and kissed her on the forehead; after which, and a few words of inquiry, Miss Penaluna was handed over to the charge of a maid. The tall, fair woman passed noiselessly on, and went into a chamber at the further end of the hall, and shut the door; and presently, the low, soft tones of a harmonium were heard, appearing to come from some considerable distance, and yet filling the house with a melancholy and slumberous music.

Surely it could not be this gentle music which brought to Master Harry's face a most un-Christian scowl? What harm could there be in a solitary widow wrapping herself up in her imaginative sorrow, and saturating the whole of her feeble, impressionable, and withal kindly, nature with a half-religious, half-poetic sentiment? What although those days which she devoted to services in memory of her relatives who were dead—

and, most of all, in memory of her husband whom she had really loved—resembled, in some respects, the periods in which an opium-eater resolves to give himself up to the strange and beautiful sensations beyond which he can imagine no form of happiness? Mrs. Trelyon was nothing of a zealot or devotee. She held no particular doctrines; she did not even countenance High Church usages, except in so far as music and painting and dim religious lights aided her endeavours to produce a species of exalted intoxication. She did not believe herself to be a wicked sinner, and she could not understand the earnest convictions and pronounced theology of the Dissenters around her. But she drank of religious sentiment as other persons drink in beautiful music; and all the aids she could bring to bear in producing this feeling of blind ecstasy she had collected together in the private chapel attached to Trelyon Hall. At this very

moment she was seated there alone. The last rays of the sun shone through narrow windows of painted glass, and carried beautiful colours with them into the dusk of the curiously-furnished little building. She herself sate before a large harmonium, and there was a stain of rose-colour and of violet on the white silk costume that she wore. It was one of her notions that, though black might well represent the grief immediately following the funeral of one's friends, pure white was the more appropriate mourning when one had become accustomed to their loss, and had turned one's eyes to the shining realms which they inhabit. Mrs. Trelyon never went out of mourning for her husband, who had been dead over a dozen years; but the mourning was of pure white; so that she wandered through the large and empty rooms of Trelyon Hall, or about the grounds outside, like a ghost; and, like a ghost, she was ordinarily silent, and shy,

and light-footed. She was not much of a companion for the rude, impetuous, self-willed boy whose education she had handed over to grooms and gamekeepers, and to his own very pronounced instincts.

The frown that came over the lad's handsome face as he sate on the door-step, resuming his task of making trout-flies, was caused by the appearance of a clergyman, who came walking forward from one of the hidden paths in the garden. There was nothing really distressing or repulsive about the look of this gentleman; although, on the other hand, there was nothing very attractive. He was of middle age and middle height; he wore a rough brown beard, and moustache; his face was grey and full of lines; his forehead was rather narrow; and his eyes were shrewd and watchful. But for that occasional glance of the eyes, you would have taken him for a very ordinary, respectable, commonplace person, not

deserving of notice, except for the length of his coat. When Master Harry saw him approach, however, a diabolical notion leapt into the young gentleman's head. He had been practising the throwing of flies against the wind; and on the lawn were the several pieces of paper, at different distances, at which he had aimed, while the slender trout-rod, with a bit of line and a fly at the end of it still dangling, was close by his hand. Instantaneously he put the rod against the wall, so that the hook was floating in front of the door just about the height of a man's head. Would the Rev. Mr. Barnes look at the door-steps, rather than in front of him, in passing into the house, and so find an artificial fly fastened in his nose? Mr. Barnes was no such fool.

"It is a pleasant afternoon, Mr. Trelyon," he said, in grave and measured accents, as he came up.

Harry Trelyon nodded, as he smoothed

out a bit of red-silk thread. Then Mr. Barnes went forward, carefully put aside the dangling fly, and went into the house.

“The fish won’t rise to-night,” said Master Harry to himself, with a grin on his face. “But parsons don’t take the fly readily; you’ve got to catch them with bait; and the bait they like best is a widow’s mite. And now, I suppose, I must go and dress for dinner; and don’t I wish I was going down to Mrs. Rosewarne’s parlour instead!”

But another⁷ had secured a better right to go into Mrs. Rosewarne’s parlour.

CHAPTER VI.

THE — AMONG THE TAILORS.

THIS other gentleman was also dressing for Mrs. Trelyon's dinner-party, and he was in a pleased frame of mind. Never before, indeed, had Mr. Roscorla been so distinctly and consciously happy. That forenoon, when his anxiety had become almost distressing—partly because he honestly liked Wenna Rosewarne and wanted to marry her, and partly because he feared the mortification of a refusal—her letter had come; and, as he read the trembling, ingenuous, and not-very-well-composed lines and sentences, a great feeling of satisfaction stole over him, and he thanked her

a thousand times, in his heart, for having given him this relief. And he was the more pleased that it was so easy to deal with a written consent. He was under no embarrassment as to how he should express his gratitude, or as to whether he ought to kiss her. He could manage correspondence better than a personal interview. He sate down and wrote her a very kind and even affectionate letter, telling her that he would not intrude himself too soon upon her, especially as he had to go up to Trelyon Hall that evening; and saying, too, that, in any case, he could never expect to tell her how thankful he was to her. That she would discover from his conduct to her during their married life.

But, to his great surprise, Mr. Roscorla found that the writing and sending off of that letter did not allay the extraordinary nervous excitement that had laid hold of him. He could not rest. He called in

his housekeeper, and rather astonished that elderly person by saying he was much pleased with her services, and thereupon he presented her with a sovereign to buy a gown. Then he went into the garden, and meant to occupy himself with his flowers; but he found himself staring at them without seeing them. Then he went back to his parlour and took a glass of sherry to steady his nerves—but in vain. Then he thought he would go down to the inn, and ask to see Wenna; but again he changed his mind, for how was he to meet the rest of the family without being prepared for the interview? Probably he never knew how he passed these two or three hours; but at length the time came for him to dress for dinner.

And, as he did so, the problem that occupied his mind was to discover the probable reasons that had induced Wenna Rosewarne to promise to be his wife. Had

her parents advised her to marry a man who could at least render her future safe? Or, had she taken pity on his loneliness, and been moved by some hope of reforming his ways and habits of thinking? Or, had she been won over by his pictures of her increased influence among the people around her? He could not tell. Perhaps, he said to himself, she said yes because she had not the courage to say no. Perhaps she had been convinced by his arguments that the wild passion of love, for which youth is supposed to long, is a dangerous thing; and was there not constantly before her eyes an example of the jealousy, and quarrelling, and misery that may follow that fatal delirium? Or, it might be—and here Mr. Roscorla more nearly approached the truth—that this shy, sensitive, self-distrustful girl had been so surprised to find herself of any importance to any one, and so grateful to him for his

praise of her, and for this highest mark of appreciation that a man can bestow, that her sudden gratitude softened her heart, and disposed her to yield to his prayer. And who could tell but that this present feeling might lead to a still warmer feeling under the generous influence of a constant kindness and appreciation? It was with something of wonder and almost of dismay—and with a wholly new sense of his own unworthiness—that Mr. Roscorla found himself regarding the possibility of his winning a young girl's first love.

Never before in his life—not even in his younger days, when he had got a stray hint that he would probably meet a duchess and her three daughters at a particular party—had he dressed with so much care. He was, on the whole, well pleased with himself. He had to admit that his grey hair was changing to white; but many people considered white hair, with a hale

complexion, rather an ornament than otherwise. For the rest, he resolved that he would never dress again to go to any party to which Miss Wenna Rosewarne was not also invited. He would not decorate himself for mere strangers and acquaintances.

He put on a light top-coat and went out into the quiet summer evening. There was a scent of roses in the air, and the great Atlantic was beautiful and still; it was a time for lovers to be walking through twilit woods, or in honeysuckle lanes, rather than for a number of people, indifferent to each other, to sit down to the vulgar pleasures of the table. He wished that Wenna Rosewarne had been of that party.

There were two or three children at his gate—bright-cheeked, clean, and well-clad, as all the Eglosilyan children are—and when they saw him come out, they ran away. He was ashamed of this; for,

if Wenna had seen it, she would have been grieved. He called on them to come back; they stood in the road, not sure of him. At length a little woman of six came timidly along to him, and looked at him with her big, wondering, blue eyes. He patted her head, and asked her name, and then he put his hand in his pocket. The others, finding that their ambassador had not been beheaded on the spot, came up also, and formed a little circle, a cautious yard or two off.

“Look here,” he said to the eldest; “here is a shilling, and you go and buy sweetmeats, and divide them equally among you. Or, wait a bit—come along with me, the whole of you, and we’ll see whether Mrs. Cornish has got any cake for you.”

He drove the flock of them into that lady’s kitchen, much to her consternation, and there he left them. But he had not

got halfway through the little garden again, when he returned, and went to the door, and called in to the children—

“Mind, you can swing on the gate whenever you like, so long as you take care and don’t hurt yourselves.”

And so he hurried away again; and he hoped that some day, when he and Wenna Rosewarne were passing, she would see the children swinging on his gate, and she would be pleased that they did not run away.

Your Polly has never been false, she declares—

he tried to hum the air, as he had often heard Wenna hum it, as he walked rapidly down the hill, and along a bit of the valley, and then up one of the great gorges lying behind Eglosilyan. He had avoided the road that went by the inn; he did not wish to see any of the Rosewarnes just then. Moreover, his rapid walking was not to save time, for he had plenty of that; but to give

himself the proud assurance that he was still in excellent wind. Miss Wenna must not imagine that she was marrying an old man. Give him but as good a horse as Harry Trelyon's famous Dick, and he would ride that dare-devil young gentleman for a wager to Launceston and back. Why, he had only arrived at that period when a sound constitution reaches its maturity. Old, or even elderly? He switched at weeds with his cane, and was conscious that he was in the prime of life.

At the same time, he did not like the notion of younger men than himself lounging about Mrs. Rosewarne's parlour; and he thought he might just as well give Harry Trelyon a hint that Wenna Rosewarne was engaged. An excellent opportunity was offered him at this moment; for as he went up through the grounds to the front of the Hall, he found Master Harry industriously throwing a fly at certain bits

of paper on the lawn. He had resumed this occupation, after having gone inside and dressed, as a handy method of passing the time until his cousin Juliott should appear.

“How do you do, Trelyon?” said Mr. Rosecorla, in a friendly way; and Harry nodded. “I wish I could throw a fly like you. By-the-by, I have a little bit of news for you—for yourself alone, mind.”

“All right; fire away,” said Master Harry, still making the fine line of the trout-rod whistle through the air.

“Well, it is rather a delicate matter, you know. I don’t want it talked about; but the fact is, I am going to marry Miss Rosewarne.”

There was no more aiming at those bits of paper. The tall and handsome lad turned and stared at his companion as if the latter had been a maniac; and then he said—

“Miss Rosewarne? Wenna Rosewarne?”

“Yes,” said Mr. Roscorla, distinctly conscious that Harry Trelyon was regarding his white hair and general appearance.

The younger man said nothing more, but began to whistle in an absent way; and then, just as if Mr. Roscorla had no existence whatever, he proceeded to reel in the line of his rod, he fastened the fly to one of the rings, and then walked off.

“You’ll find my mother inside,” he said; and so Mr. Roscorla went into the Hall, and was soon in Mrs. Trelyon’s drawing-room, among her six or eight guests.

Harry Trelyon did not appear until dinner was announced; and then he was just in time to take his grandmother in. He took care, also, to have his cousin Juliott on his other side; and, to both of these ladies, it was soon apparent that something had occurred to put Master

Harry into one of his most ungovernable moods.

“Harry?” said his mother, from the other end of the table, as an intimation that he should say grace.

There was no response, despite Miss Juliott’s appealing look; and so Mrs. Trelyon had to turn for assistance to one of the clergymen near her, who went through the prescribed form.

“Isn’t it shocking?” said Miss Penaluna, across the table, to Harry’s grandmother, who was not nearly so severe on him, for such conduct, as she ought to have been.

“Grace before meat takes too much for granted,” said the young man, unconcernedly. “How can you tell whether you are thankful until you see what sort of dinner it is? And what’s the use of keeping a dog, and barking yourself? Ain’t there three parsons down there?”

Miss Juliott, being engaged to a clergyman, very naturally resented this language ; and the two cousins had rather a stormy fight, at the end of which Master Harry turned to his grandmother and declared that she was the only woman of common sense he had ever known.

“ Well, it runs in the blood, Harry,” said the old lady, “ that dislike to clergymen ; and I never could find out any reason for it, except when your grandfather hunted poor Mr. Pascoe that night. Dear, dear ! what a jealous man your grandfather was, to be sure ; and the way he used to pet me when I told him I never saw the man I’d look at after seeing him. Dear, dear !—and the day he sold those two manors to the Company, you know, he came back at night and said I was as good a wife as any in England—he did, indeed—and the bracelet he gave me then, that shall go to your wife on your wedding-day, Harry, I promise you,

and you won't find its match about this part of the country, I can tell you. But don't you go and sell the lordship of Trelyon. Many a time your grandfather was asked to sell it, and he did well by selling the other two; but Trelyon he would never sell, nor your father, and I hope you won't either, Harry. Let them work the quarries for you—that is fair enough—and give you your royalty; but don't part with Trelyon, Harry, for you might as well be parting with your own name."

"Well, I can't, grandmother, you know; but I am fearfully in want of a big lump of money, all the same."

"Money? what do you want with a lot of money? You're not going to take to gambling or horse-racing, are you?"

"I can't tell you what I want it for—not at present, any way," said the lad, looking rather gloomy; and, with that, the

subject dropped, and a brief silence ensued at that end of the table.

Mr. Tressider, however, the mild and amiable young curate to whom Miss Juliott was engaged, having been rather left out in the cold, struck in at this moment, blushing slightly:

“ I heard you say something about lordships of manors,” he observed, addressing himself rather to Trelyon’s grandmother. “ Did it ever occur to you what a powerful thing a word from William the Conqueror must have been, when it could give to a particular person and his descendants absolute possession of a piece of the globe ? ”

Mrs. Trelyon stared at the young man. Had a relative of hers gone and engaged herself to a dangerous Revolutionary, who, in the guise of a priest, dared to trifle with the tenure of land ? Mr. Tressider was as innocent of any such intention as the babe unborn ; but he was confused by her look of

astonishment, he blushed more violently than before, and only escaped from his embarrassment by the good services of Miss Penaluna, who turned the whole matter into ridicule, and asked what William the Conqueror was about when he let a piece of the world come into the hands of Harry Trelyon.

“And how deep down have you a hold on it, Harry?” she said. “How far does your right over the minerals extend? From the surface right down to the centre?”

Mr. Tressider was smiling vaguely when Master Harry’s eye fell upon him. What harm had the young clergyman, or any other clergyman present, done him, that he should have felt a sudden dislike to that ingenuous smile?

“Oh no,” said Trelyon, with a careless impertinence; “William the Conqueror did not allow the rights of the lord of the manor to extend right down to the middle of the earth. There were a good many

clergymen about him; and they reserved that district for their own purposes."

"Harry," said his cousin to him, in a low voice; "is it your wish to insult me? If so, I will leave the room."

"Insult you!" he said, with a laugh. "Why, Jue, you must be out of your senses. What concern have you in that warmish region?"

"I don't appreciate jokes on such subjects. My father is a clergyman, my husband will be a clergyman——"

"Worse luck for you," he observed, frankly, but so that no one could hear.

"Harry," she said, "what do you mean by your dislike to clergymen?"

"Is that a conundrum?" said the unregenerate youth.

For a moment, Miss Penaluna seemed really vexed and angry; but she happened to look at Master Harry, and, somehow, her displeasure subsided into a look of good-

natured resignation. There was the least little shrug of the shoulders; and then she turned to her neighbour on the right, and began to talk about ponies.

It was certainly not a pleasant dinner-party for those who sate near this young gentleman, who was more outrageously capricious that ever, except when addressing his grandmother, to whom he was always courteous, and even roughly affectionate. That old lady eyed him narrowly, and could not quite make out what was the matter. Had he been privately engaged in some betting transaction that he should want this money?

When the ladies left the room, Trelyon asked Mr. Roscorla to take his place for a few minutes, and send round the wines; and then he went out and called his mother aside into the study.

“Mother,” he said, “Mr. Roscorla is going to marry Wenna Rosewarne.”

The tall, fair, pale lady did not seem much startled by the news. She had very little acquaintance with the affairs of the village; but she knew at least that the Rosewarnes kept the inn, and she had, every Sunday morning, seen Mrs. Rosewarne and her two daughters come into church.

“That is the elder one, is it not, who sings in the choir?”

“It’s the elder one,” said Master Harry, who knew less about the choir.

“It is a strange choice for Mr. Roscorla to make,” she observed. “I have always considered him very fastidious, and rather proud of his family. But some men take strange fancies in choosing a wife.”

“Yes, and some women take precious strange fancies in choosing a husband,” said the young man, rather warmly. “Why, she’s worth twenty dozen of him. I don’t know what the dickens made her listen to the old fool—it is a monstrous shame, that’s

what I call it. I suppose he's frightened the girl into it, or bought over her father, or made himself a hypocrite, and got some person to intercede, and scheme, and tell lies for him."

"Harry," said his mother, "I don't understand why you should interest yourself in the matter."

"Oh! well, it's only this—that I consider that girl to be the best sort of woman I've met yet—that's all; and I'll tell you what I mean to do, mother—I mean to give her five thousand pounds, so that she shan't come to that fellow in a dependent way, and let him give himself airs over her because he's been born a gentleman."

"Five thousand pounds!" Mrs. Trelyon repeated, wondering whether her son had drank too much wine at dinner.

"Well, but look here, mother," he said, quite prepared for her astonishment. "You know I've spent very little—I've never

spent anything like what I'm entitled to; and next year I shall be of age: and all I want now is for you to help me to get a release, you know; and I am sure I shall be able to persuade Colonel Ransome to it, for he'll see it is not any bit of extravagance on my part—speculation, or anything of that sort, you know——”

“My dear child,” said Mrs. Trelyon, startled, for once, into earnestness, “you will make people believe you are mad. To give five thousand pounds to the daughter of an innkeeper, a perfect stranger, as a marriage dowry—why, Harry, what do you think people would say of such a thing? What would they say of her?”

He looked puzzled for a moment, as though he did not understand her. It was but for a moment. “If you mean what one of those parsons would say of her,” he said, impetuously, while a sudden flash of anger sprang to his face, “I don't

care ; but my answer to it would be to kick him round the grounds and out at the gate. Do you think I'd care a brass farthing for anything these cringing sneaks might say of her, or of me, or of anybody ? And would they dare to say it if you asked her here, and made a friend of her ? ”

“ Make a friend of her ! ” repeated Mrs. Trelyon, almost mechanically. She did not know what length this terrible son of hers might not go.

“ If she is going to marry a friend of yours, why not ? ”

“ Harry, you are most unreasonable—if you will think it over for a moment, you will see how this is impossible. If Mr. Roscorla marries this girl, that is his own affair ; he will have society enough at home, without wishing to go out and dine. He is doing it with his eyes open, you may be sure : he has far more knowledge of such affairs than you can have. How could I

single out this girl from her family to make her a friend? I should have to ask her parents and her sister to come here also, unless you wish her to come on sufferance, and throw a reflection on them."

She spoke quite calmly, but he would not listen to her. He chafed and fidgeted, and said, as soon as she had finished—

"You could do it very well, if you liked. When a woman is willing she can always smooth matters down."

Mrs. Trelyon flushed slightly, and said, with clear emphasis:

"I presume that I am best fitted to say what society I shall keep; and I shall have no acquaintance thrust upon me whom I would rather not recognize."

"Oh, very well," said the lad, with the proud lips giving evidence of some sudden decision. "And you won't help me to get that five thousand pounds?"

“I will not. I will not countenance any such folly.”

“Then I shall have to raise the money myself.”

He rang a bell, and a servant appeared.

“Tell Jakes to saddle Dick and bring him round directly.”

His mother let him have his own way, without word or question ; for she was deeply offended, and her feeble and sensitive nature had risen in protest against his tyranny. He went off to put on a pair of riding boots and a top-coat ; and by-and-by he came down into the hall again, and went to the door. The night was dark, but clear ; there was a blaze of stars overhead ; all the world seemed to be quivering with those white throbs of fire. The horse and groom stood at the door, their dusky figures being scarcely blacker than the trees and bushes around. Harry Trelyon buttoned up the collar of his light top-

coat, took his switch in his hand, and sprung into the saddle. At the same moment the white figure of a lady suddenly appeared at the door, and came down a step or two, and said—

“Harry, where are you going?”

“To Plymouth first,” the young man answered, as he rode off; “to London afterwards, and then to the devil!”

CHAPTER VII.

SOME NEW EXPERIENCES.

WHEN the first shock of fear and anxiety was over, Wenna Rosewarne discovered to her great delight that her engagement was a very pleasant thing. The ominous doubts and regrets that had beset her mind when she was asked to become Mr. Roscorla's wife seemed to disappear like clouds from a morning sky; and then followed a fair and happy day, full of abundant satisfaction and calm. With much inward ridicule of her own vanity, she found herself nursing a notion of her self-importance, and giving herself airs as if she were already a married woman. Although the engagement

was kept a profound secret, the mere consciousness that she had attained to this position in the world lent a new assurance to her as she went about the village. She was gifted with a new authority over despondent mothers, and fractious children, and selfish fathers, as she went her daily rounds; and even in her own home Wenna had more attention paid to her, now that she was going to marry Mr. Roscorla.

There was but one dissentient, and that was Mabyn Rosewarne, who fumed and fretted about the match, and sometimes was like to cry over it, and at other times grew vastly indignant, and would have liked to have gone and given Mr. Roscorla a bit of her mind. She pitied her poor weak sister for having been coaxed into an engagement by this designing old man; and the poor weak sister was vastly amused by her compassion, and was too good-natured to laugh

at the valiant protection which this courageous young creature of sixteen offered her. Wenna let her sister say what she pleased about herself or her future, and used no other argument to stop angry words than a kiss, so long as Mabyn spoke respectfully of Mr. Roscorla. But this was precisely what Miss Mabyn was disinclined to do ; and the consequence was that their interviews were generally ended by Wenna becoming indignant, drawing herself up, and leaving the room. Then Mabyn would follow, and make up the quarrel, and promise never to offend again ; but all the same she cherished a deadly animosity towards Mr. Roscorla in her heart, and, when her sister was not present, she amused her father and shocked her mother by giving a series of imitations of Mr. Roscorla's manner which that gentleman would scarcely like to have seen.

The young lady, however, soon invented

what she considered a far more effectual means of revenging herself on Mr. Roscorla. She never left Wenna's side. No sooner did the elder sister prepare to go out, than Miss Mabyn discovered that she, too, would like a walk; and she so persistently did this that Wenna soon took it for granted that her sister would go with her wherever she went, and invariably waited for her. Accordingly Mr. Roscorla never by any chance went walking with Wenna Rosewarne alone; and the younger sister—herself too sulky to enter into conversation with him—used to enjoy the malicious pleasure of watching him shape his talk to suit the presence of a third person. For of course Miss Mabyn had read in books of the beautiful manner in which lovers speak to each other, and of their tender confidences as they sit by the sea or go rambling through the summer woods. Was not the time opportune for these idyllic ways? All the uplands were

yellowed with tall-standing corn; the sea was as blue and as still as the sky overhead; the gardens of Eglosilyan were sweet with honeysuckle and moss-roses, and in the evenings a pale pink mist hung around the horizon, while the silver sickle of the moon came up into the violet sky, and the first pale stars appeared in the east.

“If our Wenna had a proper sort of lover,” Miss Mabyn used to say to herself, bitterly, “^dwouldn’t I scheme to have them left alone! I would watch for them like a watch-dog, that no one should come near them, and I should be as proud of him as Wenna herself;^{||} and how happy she would be in talking to me about him! But this horrid old wretch—I wish he would fall over Black Cliff some day!”

She was not aware that, in becoming the constant companion of her sister, she was affording this dire enemy of hers a vast amount of relief. Mr. Roscorla was in every

way satisfied with his engagement; the more he saw of Wenna Rosewarne, the more he admired her utter self-forgetfulness, and liked a quaint and shy sort of humour that interfused her talk and her ways; but he greatly preferred not to be alone with her. He was then beset by some vague impression that certain things were demanded of him, in the character of a lover, which were exceedingly embarrassing; and which, if he did not act the part well, might awaken her ridicule. On the other hand, if he omitted all those things, might she not be surprised by his lack of affection, begin to suspect him, and end by disliking him? Yet he knew that not for ten thousand worlds could he muster up courage to repeat one line of sentimental poetry to her.

As yet he had never even had the courage to kiss her. He knew that this was wrong. In his own house he reflected that a man engaged to a woman ought surely to

give her some such mark of affection—say, in bidding her good-night; and thereupon Mr. Roscorla would resolve that, as he left the inn that evening, he would endeavour to kiss his future bride. He never succeeded. Somehow Wenna always parted from him in a merry mood. These were pleasant evenings in Mrs. Rosewarne's parlour; there was a good deal of quiet fun going on; and if Wenna did come along the passage to the door with him, she was generally talking and laughing all the way. Of course he was not going to kiss her in that mood—as if, to use his own expression, he had been a jocular ploughboy.

He had kissed her hand once. That was on his first meeting her after she had written the letter in which she promised to be his wife, and Mrs. Rosewarne had sent him into the room where she knew her daughter was alone. Wenna rose up to meet him, pale, frightened, with her eyes downcast. He

took her hand and kissed it ; and then after a pause, he said, "I hope I shall make you happy." She could not answer. She began to tremble violently. He asked her to sit down, and begged of her not to be disturbed. She was recalled to herself by the accidental approach of her sister Mabyn, who came along the passage, singing, "Oh, the men of merry, merry England," in excellent imitation of the way in which Harry Trelyon used to sing that once famous song as he rode his black horse along the highways. Mabyn came into the room, stared, and would have gone out, but that her sister called to her and asked her to come and hold down a pattern while she cut some cloth. Mabyn wondered that her sister should be so diligent when a visitor was present. She saw, too, that Wenna's fingers trembled. Then she remained in the room until Mr. Roscorla went, sitting by a window and not overhearing their

conversation, but very much inclined to break in upon it by asking him how he dared to come there and propose to marry her sister Wenna.

“Oh, Wenna,” she said, one evening some time after, when the two sisters were sitting out on the rocks at the end of the harbour, watching the sun go down behind the sea, “I cannot bear him coming to take you away like that. I shouldn’t mind if he were like a sweetheart to you; but he’s a multiplication-table sort of sweetheart—everything so regular, and accurate, and proper. I hate a man who always thinks what he’s going to say, and always has neat sentences; and he watches you, and is so self-satisfied, and his information is always so correct. Oh, Wenna, I wish you had a young and beautiful lover, like a Prince!”

“My dear child,” said the elder sister, with a smile, “young and beautiful lovers are for young and beautiful girls, like you.”

“Oh, Wenna, how can you talk like that!” said the younger sister; “why will you always believe that you are less pretty than other people, when every one knows that you have the most beautiful eyes in all the world. You have! There’s not anybody in all the world has such beautiful and soft eyes as you—you ask anybody and they will tell you, if you don’t believe me. But I have no doubt—I have no doubt whatever—that Mr. Roscorla will try to make you believe you are very ugly, so that you mayn’t think you’ve thrown yourself away.”

Miss Mabyn looked very indignant, and very much inclined to cry at the same time; but the gentle sister put her hand on hers, and said—

“You will make me quarrel with you some day, Mabyn, if you are so unjust to Mr. Roscorla. You are continually accusing him of things of which he never dreams. Now he never gets a chance that he does

not try to praise me in every way, and if there were no looking-glasses in the world I have no doubt he would make me believe I was quite lovely; and you shouldn't say those things of him, Mabyn—it isn't fair. He always speaks kindly of you. He thinks you are very pretty, and that you will grow up to be very beautiful when you become a woman."

Mabyn was not to be pacified by this ingenuous piece of flattery.

"You are such a simpleton, Wenna," she said, "he can make you believe anything."

"He does not try to make me believe anything I don't know already," said the elder sister, with some asperity.

"He tries to make you believe he is in love with you," said Mabyn, bluntly.

Wenna Rosewarne coloured up, and was silent for a minute. How was she to explain to this sister of hers all those

theories which Mr. Roscorla had described to her in his first two or three letters? She felt that she had not the same gift of expression that he had.

“ You don’t understand—you don’t understand at all, Mabyn, what you talk of as love. I suppose you mean the sort of wild madness you read of in books—well, I don’t want that kind of love at all. There is a quite different sort of love, that comes of respect and affection and an agreement of wishes, and that is far more valuable and likely to be lasting. I don’t want a lover who would do wild things, and make one wonder at his heroism, for that is the lover you get in books; but if you want to live a happy life, and please those around you, and be of service to them, you must have a very different sort of sweetheart—a man who will think of something else than a merely selfish passion, who will help you to be kind to other people, and

whose affection will last through years and years."

"You have learnt your lesson very well," said Miss Mabyn, with a toss of her head. "He has spent some time in teaching you. But as for all that, Wenna, it's nothing but fudge. What a girl wants is to be really loved by a man, and then she can do without all those fine sentiments. As for Mr. Roscorla——"

"I do not think we are likely to agree on this matter, dear," said Wenna, calmly, as she rose, "and so we had better say nothing about it."

"Oh, I am not going to quarrel with you, Wenna," said the younger sister, promptly. "You and I will always agree very well. It is Mr. Roscorla and I who are not likely to agree very well—not at all likely, I can assure you."

They were walking back to Eglosilyan, under the clear evening skies, when whom

should they see coming out to meet them but Mr. Roscorla himself. It was a pleasant time and place for lovers to come together. The warm light left by the sunset still shone across the hills; the clear blue-green water in the tiny harbour lay perfectly still; Eglosilyan had got its day's work over, and was either chatting in the cottage gardens or strolling down to have a look at the couple of coasters moored behind the small but powerful breakwater. But Mr. Roscorla had had no hope of discovering Wenna alone; he was quite as well content to find Mabyn with her, though that young lady, as he came up, looked particularly fierce, and did not smile at all when she shook hands with him. Was it the red glow in the west that gave an extra tinge of colour to Mr. Roscorla's face? Wenna felt that she was better satisfied with her engagement when her lover was not present; but she put that down to a natural shyness and

modesty which she considered was probably common to all girls in these strange circumstances.

Mr. Roscorla wished to convoy the two young ladies back to the inn, and evidently meant to spend the evening there. But Miss Wenna ill requited his gallantry by informing him that she had intended to make one or two calls in the evening, which would occupy some time: in particular, she had undertaken to do something for Mrs. Luke's eldest girl; and she had also promised to go in and read for half an hour to Nicholas Keam, the brother of the wife of the owner of the Napoleon Hotel, who was very ill indeed, and far too languid to read for himself.

"But you know, Mr. Roscorla," said Mabyn, with a bitter malice, "if you would go into the Napoleon and read to Mr. Keam, Wenna and I could go up to Mother Luke's, and so we should save all that time,

and I am sure Wenna is very tired to-day. Then you would be so much better able to pick out the things in the papers that Mr. Keam wants; for Wenna never knows what is old and what is new, and Mr. Keam is anxious to learn what is going on in politics, and the Irish Church, and that kind of thing."

Could he refuse? Surely a man who has just got a girl to say she will marry him, ought not to think twice about sacrificing half an hour to helping her in her occupations, especially if she be tired. Wenna could not have made the request herself; but she was anxious that he should say yes, now it had been made, for it was in a manner a test of his devotion to her; and she was overjoyed and most grateful to him when he consented. What Mabyn thought of the matter was not visible on her face.

CHAPTER VIII.

WENNA'S FIRST TRIUMPH.

THE two girls, as they went up the main street of Eglosilyan (it was sweet with the scent of flowers on this beautiful evening), left Mr. Roscorla in front of the obscure little public-house he had undertaken to visit; and it is probable that in the whole of England at that moment there was not a more miserable man. He knew this Nicholas Keam, and his sister, and his brother-in-law, so far as their names went, and they knew him by sight; but he had never said more than good-morning to any one of them, and he had certainly never entered this pot-house, where a sort of

debating society was nightly held by the *habitués*. But, all the same, he would do what he had undertaken to do, for Wenna Rosewarne's sake; and it was with some sensation of a despairing heroism that he went up the steps of slate and crossed the threshold.

He looked into the place from the passage. He found before him what was really a large kitchen, with a spacious fireplace, and heavy rafters across the roof; but all round the walls there was a sort of bench with a high wooden back to it, and on this seat sat a number of men—one or two labourers, the rest slate-workers—who, in the dusk, were idly smoking and looking at the beer on the narrow tables before them. Was this the sort of place that his future wife had been in the habit of visiting? There was a sort of gloomy picturesqueness about the chamber, to be sure; for, warm as the evening was, a fire burned flickeringly

in the grate; there was enough light to show the tin and copper vessels shining over the high mantelpiece; and a couple of fair-haired children were playing about the middle of the floor, little heeding the row of dusky figures around the tables, whose heads were half hidden by tobacco-smoke.

A tall, thin, fresh-coloured woman came along the passage; and Mr. Roscorla was glad that he had not to go in among these labourers to make his business known. It was bad enough to have to speak to Mrs. Haigh, the landlady of the Napoleon.

“Good morning, Mrs. Haigh,” said he, with an appearance of cheerfulness.

“Good evenin’, zor,” said she, staring at him with those cruelly shrewd and clear eyes that the Cornish peasantry have.

“I called in to see Mr. Kean,” said he. “Is he much better?”

“If yū’d like vor to see ‘n, zor,” said she, rather slowly, as if waiting for further

explanation, “yü'll vind 'n in the rüm”—and with that she opened the door of a room on the other side of the passage. It was obviously the private parlour of the household—an odd little chamber with plenty of coloured lithographs on the walls, and china and photographs on the mantelpiece; the floor of large blocks of slate ornamented with various devices in chalk; in the corner a cupboard filled with old cut crystal, brass candlesticks, and other articles of luxury. The room had one occupant—a tall man who sate in a big wooden chair by the window, his head hanging forward between his high shoulders, and his thin white hands on the arms of the chair. The sunken cheeks, the sallow-white complexion, the listless air, and an occasional sigh of resignation told a sufficiently plain story; although Mrs. Haigh, in regarding her brother, and speaking to him in a low voice, as if to arouse his attention, wore an air of

brisk cheerfulness strangely in contrast with the worn look of his face.

“Don’t yü knaw Mr. Roscorla, brother Nicholas?” said his sister. “Don’t yü look mazed, when he’s come vor to zee if yü’re better. And yü be much better to-day, brother Nicholas?”

“Yes, I think,” said the sick man, agreeing with his sister out of mere listlessness.

“Oh yes, I think you look much better,” said Mr. Roscorla, hastily and nervously, for he feared that both these people would see in his face what he thought of this unhappy man’s chances of living. But Nicholas Kean mostly kept his eyes turned towards the floor, except when the brisk, loud voice of his sister roused him and caused him to look up.

A most awkward pause ensued. Mr. Roscorla felt convinced they would think he was mad if he offered to sit down in this

parlour and read the newspapers to the invalid; he forgot that they did not know him as well as he did himself. On the other hand, would they not consider him a silly person if he admitted that he only made the offer in order to please a girl? Besides, he could see no newspapers in the room. Fortunately, at this moment, Mr. Kean himself came to the rescue by saying, in a slow and languid way—

“I did expect vor to zee Miss Rosewarne this evenin’—yaäs, I did; and she were to read me the news; but I suppose now——”

“Oh!” said Mr. Roscorla, quickly, “I have just seen Miss Rosewarne—she told me she expected to see you, but was a little tired. Now, if you like, I will read the newspapers to you as long as the light lasts.”

“Why don’t yü thank the gentleman, brother Nicholas?” said Mrs. Haigh, who was apparently most anxious to get away to her duties. “That be very kind of yü, zor.

'Tis a great comfort to 'n to hear the news; and I'll send yü in the papers to once. Yü com away with me, Rosana, and yü can come agwain and bring the gentleman the newspapers."

She dragged off with her a small girl who had wandered in; and Mr. Roscorla was left alone with the sick man. The feelings in his heart were not thoes which Wenna would have expected to find there as the result of the exercise of charity.

The small girl came back, and give him the newspapers. He began to read; she sate down before him and stared up into his face. Then a brother of hers came in, and he, too, sate down, and proceeded to stare. Mr. Roscorla inwardly began to draw pictures of the astonishment of certain of his old acquaintances if they had suddenly opened that small door, and found him, in the parlour of an ale-house, reading stale political articles to an apparently

uninterested invalid and a couple of cottage children.

He was thankful that the light was rapidly declining; and long before he had reached the half-hour he made that his excuse for going.

"The next time I come, Mr. Kean," said he, cheerfully, as he rose and took his hat, "I shall come earlier."

"I did expect vor to zee Miss Rosewarne this evenin'," said Nicholas Kean, ungratefully paying no heed to the hypocritical offer; "vor she were here yesterday marnin', and she told me that Mr. Trelyon had zeen my brother in London streets, and I want vor to know mower about 'n, I dü."

"*She* told you?" Mr. Roscorla said, with a sudden and wild suspicion filling his mind. "How did she know that Mr. Trelyon was in London?"

"How did she knaw?" repeated the

sick man, indolently. “Why, he zaid zo in the letter.”

So Mr. Trelyon, whose whereabouts were not even known to his own family, was in correspondence with Miss Rosewarne, and she had carefully concealed the fact from the man she was going to marry. Mr. Roscorla rather absently took his leave. When he went outside a clear twilight was shining over Eglosilyan, and the first of the yellow stars were palely visible in the grey. He walked slowly down towards the inn.

If Mr. Roscorla had any conviction on any subject whatever, it was this—that no human being ever thoroughly and without reserve revealed himself or herself to any other human being. Of course he did not bring that as a charge against the human race, or against that member of it from whose individual experience he had derived his theory—himself; he merely

accepted this thing as one of the facts of life. People, he considered, might be fairly honest, well-intentioned, and moral; but inside the circle of their actions and sentiments that were openly declared there was another circle only known to themselves; and to this region the foul bird of suspicion, as soon as it was born, immediately fled on silent wings. Not that, after a minute's consideration, he suspected anything very terrible in the present case. He was more vexed than alarmed. And yet at times, as he slowly walked down the steep street, he grew a little angry, and wondered how this apparently ingenuous creature should have concealed from him her correspondence with Harry Trelyon, and resolved that he would have a speedy explanation of the whole matter. He was too shrewd a man of the world to be tricked by a girl, or trifled with by an impertinent lad.

He was overtaken by the two girls, and they walked together the rest of the way. Wenna was in excellent spirits, and was very kind and grateful to him. Somehow, when he heard her low and sweet laughter, and saw the frank kindness of her dark eyes, he abandoned the gloomy suspicions that had crossed his mind; but he still considered that he had been injured, and that the injury was all the greater in that he had just been persuaded into making a fool of himself for Wenna Rosewarne's sake.

He said nothing to her then, of course; and, as the evening passed cheerfully enough in Mrs. Rosewarne's parlour, he resolved he would postpone inquiry into this matter. He had never seen Wenna so pleased herself, and so obviously bent on pleasing others. She petted her mother, and said slyly sarcastic things of her father, until George Rosewarne roared

with laughter ; she listened with respectful eyes and attentive ears when Mr. Roscorla pronounced an opinion on the affairs of the day ; and she dexterously cut rolls of paper and dressed up her sister Mabyn to represent a lady of the time of Elizabeth, to the admiration of everybody. Mr. Roscorla had inwardly to confess that he had secured for himself a most charming and delightful wife, who would make a wonderful difference in those dull evenings up at Basset Cottage.

He only half guessed the origin of Miss Wenna's great and obvious satisfaction. It was really this—that she had that evening reaped the first welcome fruits of her new relations in finding Mr. Roscorla ready to go and perform acts of charity. But for her engagement, that would certainly not have happened ; and this, she believed, was but the auspicious beginning. Of course Mr. Roscorla would have laughed if she had

informed him of her belief that the regeneration of the whole little world of Eglosilyan—something like the Millennium, indeed—was to come about merely because an innkeeper's daughter was about to be made a married woman. Wenna Rosewarne, however, did not formulate any such belief; but she was none the less proud of the great results that had already been secured by—by what? By her sacrifice of herself? She did not pursue the subject so far.

Her delight was infectious. Mr. Roscorla, as he walked home that night—under the throbbing starlight, with the sound of the Atlantic murmuring through the darkness—was, on the whole, rather pleased that he had been vexed on hearing of that letter from Harry Trelyon. He would continue to be vexed. He would endeavour to be jealous without measure; for how can jealousy exist if an anxious love is not also

present? and, in fact, should not a man who is really fond of a woman be quick to resent the approach of any one who seems to interfere with his right of property in her affections! By the time he reached Basset Cottage, Mr. Roscorla had very nearly persuaded himself into the belief that he was really in love with Wenna Rosewarne.

CHAPTER IX.

THE RING OF EVIL OMEN.

ONE of Wenna's many friends outside the village in which she lived was a strange misshapen creature who earned his living by carrying sand from one of the bays on the coast to the farmers on the uplands above. This he did by means of a troop of donkeys—small, rough, light-haired, and large-eyed animals—that struggled up the rude and steep path on the face of the cliff, with the bags on their backs that he had laboriously filled below. It was a sufficiently cheerless occupation for this unfortunate hunchback, and not a very profitable one. The money he got from the farmers did not much more

than cover the keep of the donkeys. He seldom spoke to any human being ; for who was going to descend that rough and narrow path down to the shore—where he and his donkeys appeared to be no bigger than mice—with the knowledge that there was no path round the precipitous coast, and that nothing would remain but the long climb up again ?

Wenna Rosewarne had some pity for this solitary wretch, who toiled at his task with the melancholy Atlantic before him, and behind him a great and lonely wall of crumbling slate ; and, whenever she had time, she used to walk with her sister across from Eglosilyan by the high-lying downs until they reached this little indentation in the coast where a curve of yellow sand was visible far below. If this poor fellow and his donkeys were to be seen from the summit, the two girls had little fear of the fatigue of descending the path down

the side of the steep cliff; and the object of their visit used to be highly pleased and flattered by their coming to chat with him for a few minutes. He would hasten the filling of his bags so as to ascend again with them, and, in a strange tongue that even the two Cornish girls could not always understand, he would talk to them of the merits of his favourite donkeys, of their willingness, and strength, and docility. They never took him any tracts; they never uttered a word of condolence or sympathy. Their visit was merely of the nature of a friendly call; but it was a mark of attention and kindness that gave the man something pleasant to think of for days thereafter.

Now, on one of these occasions, Mr. Roscorla went with Wenna and her sister; and although he did not at all see the use of going down this precipitous cliff for the mere purpose of toiling up again, he was not going to confess that he dreaded the fatigue

of it. Moreover, this was another mission of charity ; and, although he had not called again on Mr. Keam—although, in fact, he had inwardly vowed that the prayers of a thousand angels would not induce him again to visit Mr. Keam—he was anxious that Wenna should believe that he still remained her pupil. So, with a good grace, he went down the tortuous pathway to the desolate little bay where the sand-carrier was at work. He stood and looked at the sea while Wenna chatted with her acquaintance ; he studied the rigging of the distant ships ; he watched the choughs and daws flying about the face of the rocks ; he drew figures on the sand with the point of his cane, and wondered whether he would be back in good time for luncheon if this garrulous hunchback jabbered in his guttural way for another hour. Then he had the pleasure of climbing up the cliff again, with a whole troop of donkeys going before him in Indian

file up the narrow and zig-zag path, and at last he reached the summit. His second effort in the way of charity had been accomplished.

He proposed that the young ladies should sit down to rest for a few minutes, after the donkeys and their driver had departed; and accordingly the three strangers chose a block of slate for a seat, with the warm grass for a footstool, and all around them the beauty of an August morning. The sea was ruffled into a dark blue where it neared the horizon; but closer at hand it was pale and still. The sun was hot on the bleak pasture-land. There was a scent of fern and wild thyme in the air.

“By the way, Wenna,” said Mr. Roscorla, “I wonder you have never asked me why I have not yet got you an engaged ring.”

“Wenna does not want an engaged

ring," said Miss Mabyn, sharply. "They are not worn now."

This audacious perversion of fact on the part of the self-willed young beauty was in reality a sort of cry of despair. If Mr. Roscorla had not yet spoken of a ring to Wenna, Mabyn had; and Mabyn had besought of her sister not to accept this symbol of hopeless captivity.

"Oh, Wenna!" she had said, "if you take a ring from him, I shall look on you as carried away from us for ever."

"Nonsense, Mabyn," the elder sister had said. "The ring is of no importance; it is the word you have spoken that is."

"Oh no, it isn't," Mabyn said earnestly. "As long as you don't wear a ring, Wenna, I still fancy I shall get you back from him; and you may say what you like, but you are far too good for him."

"Mabyn, you are a disobedient child," the elder sister said, stopping the argument

with a kiss, and not caring to raise a quarrel.

Well, when Mr. Roscorla was suddenly confronted by this statement, he was startled; but he inwardly resolved that, as soon as he and Wenna were married, he would soon bring Miss Maby's interference in their affairs to an end. At present he merely said, mildly—

“I was not aware that engaged rings were no longer worn. However, if that be so, it is no reason why we should discontinue a good old custom; and I have put off getting you one, Wenna, because I knew I had to go to London soon. I find now I must go on Monday next; and so I want you to tell me what sort of stones you like best in a ring.”

“I am sure I don't know,” Wenna said, humbly and dutifully. “I am sure to like whatever you choose.”

“But what do you prefer yourself?” he again said.

Wenna hesitated, but Miss Mabyn did not. She was prepared for the crisis. She had foreseen it.

“Oh, Mr. Roscorla,” she said (and you would not have fancied there was any guile or malice in that young and pretty face, with its tender blue eyes and its proud and sweet mouth), “don’t you know that Wenna likes emeralds?”

Mr. Roscorla was very near telling the younger sister to mind her own business; but he was afraid. He only said, in a stiff way, to his betrothed—

“Do you like emeralds?”

“I think they are very pretty,” Wenna replied, meekly. “I am sure I shall like any ring you choose.”

“Oh, very well,” said he, rather discontented that she would show no preference. “I shall get you an emerald ring.”

When she heard this decision, the heart of Mabyn Rosewarne was filled with an

unholy joy. This was the rhyme that was running through her head :—

*Oh, green's forsaken,
And yellow's forsworn,
And blue's the sweetest
Colour that's worn !*

Wenna was saved to her now. How could any two people marry who had engaged themselves with an emerald ring? There was a great deal of what might be called natural religion in this young lady, to distinguish it from that which she had been taught on Sunday forenoons and at her mother's knee : a belief in occult influences ruling the earth, unnameable, undefinable, but ever present and ever active. If fairly challenged, she might have scrupled to say that she believed in Browneys, or the Small People, or in any one of the thousand superstitions of the Cornish peasantry. But she faithfully observed these superstitions. If her less heedful sister put a cut loaf upside down on the plate, Mabyn would

instantly right it, and say "Oh, Wenna!" as if her sister had forgotten that that simple act meant that some ship was in sore distress. If Wenna laughed at any of these fancies, Mabyn said nothing; but all the same she was convinced in her own mind that things happened to people in a strange fashion, and in accordance with omens that might have been remarked. She knew that if Mr. Roscorla gave Wenna a ring of emeralds, Mr. Roscorla would never marry her.

One thing puzzled her, however. Which of the two was to be the forsaken? Was it Wenna or Mr. Roscorla who would break this engagement that the younger sister had set her heart against? Well, she would not have been sorry if Mr. Roscorla were the guilty party, except in so far as some humiliation might thereby fall on Wenna. But the more she thought of the matter, the more she was convinced that

Mr. Roscorla was aware he had the best of the bargain, and was not at all likely to seek to escape from it. It was he who must be forsaken; and she had no pity for him. What right had an old man to come and try to carry off her sister—her sister whose lover ought to be “young and beautiful like a prince”? Mabyn kept repeating the lines to herself all the time they walked homewards; and if Wenna had asked her a question just then, the chances are she would have answered—

*Oh, green's forsaken,
And yellow's forsworn,
And blue's the sweetest
Colour that's worn!*

But Wenna was otherwise engaged during this homeward walk. Mr. Roscorla, having resolved to go to London, thought he might as well have that little matter about Harry Trelyon cleared up before he went. He had got all the good out of it possible, by nursing whatever unquiet suspicions it pro-

voked, and trying to persuade himself that as he was in some measure jealous he must in some measure be in love. But he had not the courage to take these suspicions with him to London; they were not pleasant travelling companions.

“I wonder,” he said, in rather a nervous way, “whether I shall see young Trelyon in London.”

Wenna was not at all disturbed by the mention of the name. She only said, with a smile—

“It is a big place to seek any one in.”

“You know he is there?”

“Oh yes,” she answered directly.

“It is odd that you should know, for he has not told any one up at Trelyon Hall; in fact, no one appears to have heard anything about him but yourself.”

“How very silly of him,” Wenna said, “to be so thoughtless! Doesn’t his mother know? Do you think she would like to know?”

“Well,” said he, with marked coldness, “doubtless she would be surprised at his having communicated with you in preference to any one else.”

Wenna’s soft dark eyes were turned up to his face with a sudden look of astonishment. He had never spoken to her in this way before. She could not understand. And then she said, very quickly, and with a sudden flush of colour to the pale face—

“Oh ! but this letter is only about the dog. I will show it to you. I have it in my pocket.”

She took out the letter and handed it to him ; and he might have seen that her hand trembled. She was very much perturbed—she scarcely knew why. But there was something in his manner that had almost frightened her—something distant, and harsh, and suspicious ; and surely she had done no wrong ?

He smoothed out the crumpled sheet

of paper, and a contemptuous smile passed over his face.

“He writes with more care to you than to other people ; but I can’t say much for his handwriting at the best.”

Wenna coloured, and said nothing ; but Mabyn remarked, rather warmly—

“I don’t think a man need try to write like a dancing-master, if he means what he says, and can tell you that frankly.”

Mr. Roscorla did not heed this remarkably incoherent speech, for he was reading the letter, which ran as follows :—

“Nolan’s Hotel, London, July 30, 18—.

“DEAR MISS ROSEWARNE,

“I know you would like to have Rock, and he’s no good at all as a retreaver, and I’ve written to Luke to take him down to you at the Inn, and I shall be very pleased if you will accept him as a present from me. Either Luke or your father will

tell you how to feed him ; and I am sure you will be kind to him, and not chain him up, and give him plenty of exercise. I hope you are all well at the Inn, and that Mabyn's pigeons have not flown^e away. Tell her not to forget the piece of looking-glass.

“ Yours faithfully,

“ HARRY TRELYON.

“ P.S.—I met Joshua Kearn quite by accident yesterday. He asked for you most kindly. His leg has been amputated at last.”

Here was nothing at which a jealous lover might grumble. Mr. Roscorla handed back the letter with scarcely a word, leaving Wenna to puzzle over what had happened to make him look at her in that strange way. As for Miss Mabyn, that young lady would say nothing to hurt her sister's feelings ; but she said many a bitter

thing to herself about the character of a gentleman who would read another gentleman's letter, particularly when the former was an elderly gentleman and the latter a young one, and most of all when the young gentleman had been writing to a girl, and that girl her sister Wenna. "But green's forsaken," Mabyn said to herself, as if there was great comfort in that reflection—"green's forsaken, and yellow's forsworn!"

And so Mr. Roscorla was going away from Eglosilyan for a time, and Wenna would be left alone.

Certainly, if this brief separation promised to afflict her grievously, it had not that effect in the mean time; for once she had gone over the matter in her mind, and sketched out, as was her wont, all that she ought to do, she quickly recovered her cheerfulness, and was in very good spirits indeed when the small party reached Eglo-

silyan. And here was a small and sun-burnt boy—Master Pentecost Luke, in fact—waiting for her right in the middle of the road in front of the inn, whom she caught up, and kissed, and scolded all at once.

“Whatever are you doing down here, sir, all by yourself?”

“I have tum to see you,” the small boy said, in no way frightened or abashed by her rough usage of him.

“And so you want Mr. Trelyon to ride over you again, do you? Haven’t I told you never to come here without some of your brothers and sisters? Well, say ‘How do you do?’ to the gentleman. Don’t you know Penny Luke, Mr. Roscorla?”

“I believe I have that honour,” said Mr. Roscorla, with a smile, but not at all pleased to be kept in the middle of the road chattering to a cottager’s child.

Miss Wenna presently showed that she was a well-built and active young woman,

by swinging Master Penny up, and perching him on her shoulder, in which fashion she carried him into the inn.

“Penny is a great friend of mine,” she said to Mr. Roscorla, who would not himself have attempted that feat of skill and dexterity, “and you must make his acquaintance. He is a very good boy on the whole, but sometimes he goes near to breaking my heart. I shall have to give him up, and take another sweetheart, if he doesn’t mind. He *will* eat with his fingers, and he will run out and get among horses’ feet; and as for the way he conducts himself when his face is being washed, and he is being made like a gentleman, I never saw the like of it.”

Master Penny did not seem much ashamed; he was, in fact, too proud of his position. They marched him into the inn, where, doubtless, he received all the petting and other good things he had been shrewdly expecting.

Mabyn said her prayers that night in the ordinary and formal fashion. She prayed for her father and mother and for her sister Wenna, as she had been taught; and she added in the Princess of Wales on her own account, because she liked her pretty face. She also prayed that she herself should be made humble and good, desirous of serving her fellow-creatures, and charitable to every one. All this was done in due order.

But in point of fact her heart was at that moment far from being meek and charitable; it was, on the contrary, filled with bitterness and indignation. And the real cry of her soul, unknown to herself, went out to all the vague, imaginative powers of magic and witchcraft—to the mysterious influences of the stars and the strange controllers of chance: and it was to these that she looked for the rescue of her sister from the doom that threatened her,

and to them that she appealed, with a yearning far too great for words or even for tears. When she was but a child playing among the rocks, she had stumbled on the dead body of a sailor that had been washed ashore; and she had run, white and trembling, into the village with the news. Afterwards she was told that on the hand of the corpse a ring with a green stone in it was found; and then she heard for the first time the rhyme that had never since left her memory. She certainly did not wish that Mr. Roscorla should die; but she as certainly wished that her sister Wenna should be saved from becoming his wife; and she reflected with a fierce satisfaction that it was she who had driven him to promise that Wenna's engaged ring should be composed of those fatal stones.

CHAPTER X.

THE SNARES OF LONDON.

IF Mr. Harry Trelyon was bent on going to the devil, to use his own phrase, he went a quiet way about it. On the warm and close evening of a summer day he arrived in London. A red smoke hung about the western sky, over the tops of the houses; the thoroughfares that were in shadow were filled with a pale blue mist; the air was still and stifling—very different from that which came in at night from the sea to the gardens and cottages of Eglosilyan. He drove down through these hot and crowded streets to an hotel near Charing Cross—an old-fashioned little place much frequented

by west-country people, who sometimes took rooms there, and brought their daughters up for a month or so of the season, at which time no other guests could obtain admission. At ordinary times, however, the place was chiefly tenanted by a few country gentlemen and a clergyman or two, who had small sitting-rooms, in which they dined with their families, and in which they drank a glass of something hot before going to bed at night after coming home from the theatre.

Harry Trelyon was familiar with the place, and its ways, and the traditions of his father and grandfather having invariably come to it; and, following in their footsteps, he, too, obtained a private sitting-room as well as a bed-room, and then he ordered dinner. It was not much in the way of a banquet for a young gentleman who was determined to go to the devil. It consisted of a beefsteak and a pint of

claret; and it was served in a fairly-sized, old-fashioned, dimly-lit room, the furniture of which was of that very substantial sort that is warranted to look dingy for a couple of generations. He was attended by a very old and shrunken waiter, whose white whiskers were more respectable than his shabby clothes. On his first entrance into the room he had looked at the young man who, in a rough shooting suit, was stretched out at full length in an easy-chair; and, in answering a question, he had addressed him by his name.

“How do you know my name?” the lad said.

“Ah, sir, there’s no mistaking one o’ your family. I can remember your grandfather, and your uncle, and your father—did you never hear, sir, that I was a witness for your father at the police-court?”

“What row was that?” the young gentleman asked, showing his familiarity

with the fact that the annals of the Trelyons were of a rather stormy character.

“Why, sir,” the old man said, warming up into a little excitement, and unconsciously falling into something like the provincial accent of his youth, “I believe you was in the hotel at the time—yes, as well as I can recollect, you was a little chap then, and had gone to bed. Well, maybe I’m wrong—’tis a good few years agone. But, anyhow, your father and that good lady your mother, they were a-coming home from a theatre; and there was two or three young fellers on the pavement—I was the porter then, sir—and I think that one of ’em called out to the other, ‘Well, here’s a country beauty,’ or some such cheek. But, anyhow, your father, sir, he knocks him aside, and takes his good lady into the door of the hotel, and then they was for follerin’ of him, but as soon as she was inside, then he turns, and there was a word

or two, and one of 'em he ups with a stick, and says I to myself, 'I can't stand aby and see three or four set on one gentleman;' but lor! sir—well, you wouldn't believe it—but before I could make a step, there was two of 'em lyin' on the pavement—clean, straight down, sir, with their hats running into the street—and the other two making off as fast as they could bolt across the square. Oh, lor, sir, wa'n't it beautiful! And the way as your father turned and says he to me, with a laugh like, 'Tomlins,' says he, 'you can give them gentlemen a glass of brandy and water when they ask for it'! And the magistrate, sir, he was a real sensible gentleman, and he give it hot to these fellers, for they began the row, sir, and no mistake; but to see the way they went down—lor, sir, you can't believe it!"

“Oh, can't I, though?” Master Harry said, with a roar of laughter. “Don't you

make any mistake. I say, what did you say your name was?"

"My name, sir," said the old man, suddenly sinking from the epic heights which had lent a sort of inspiration to his face, down to the ordinary chastened and respectful bearing of a waiter, "my name, sir, in the hotel is Charles; but your good father, sir, he knowed my name, which is Tomlins, sir."

"Well, look here, Tomlins," the boy said, "you go and ask the landlady to give you a holiday this evening, and come in and smoke a pipe with me."

"Oh, lor, sir," the old waiter said, aghast at the very notion, "I couldn't do that. It would be as much as my place is worth."

"Oh, never mind your place—I'll get you a better one," the lad said, with a sort of royal carelessness. "I'll get you a place down in Cornwall. You come and help our butler—he's a horrid old fool. When I

come of age, I mean to build a house there for myself. No, I think I shall have rooms in London—anyhow, I'll give you £100 a year."

The old man shook his head.

"No, sir, thank you very much, sir. I'm too old to begin again. You want a younger man than me. Beg your pardon, sir, but they're ringing for me."

"Poor old beggar!" said Trelyon to himself, when the waiter had left the room; "I wonder if he's married, and if he's got any kids that one could help. And so he was a witness for my father. Well, he shan't suffer for that."

Master Harry finished his steak and his pint of claret; then he lit a cigar, got into a hansom, and drove up to a street in Seven Dials, where he at length discovered a certain shop. The shutters were on the windows, and a stout old lady was taking in from the door the last of the

rabbit-hutches and cages that had been out there during the evening.

“ You’re Mrs. Finch, ain’t you ? ” Trelyon said, making his way into the shop, which was lit inside by a solitary jet of gas.

“ Yes, sir,” said the woman, looking up at the tall young man in the rough shooting-costume and brown wideawake.

“ Well, my name’s Trelyon, and I’m come to blow you up. A pretty mess you made of that flamingo for me—why, a bishop in lawn sleeves couldn’t have stuffed it worse. Where did you ever see a bird with a neck like a corkscrew?—and when I opened it to put it straight, then I found out all your tricks, Mrs. Finch.”

“ But you know, sir,” said Mrs. Finch, smiling blandly, “ it ain’t our line of business.”

“ Well, I’d advise you to get somebody else next time to stuff for you. However,

I bear you no malice. You show me what you've got in the way of live stock ; and if you take fifty per cent. off your usual prices, I'll let the corkscrew flamingo go."

A minute thereafter he was being conducted down some very dark steps into a subterranean cellar by this stout old woman, who carried a candle in front of him. Their entrance into this large, dismal, and strangely filled place—at the further end of which was a grating looking up to the street—awoke a profound commotion among the animals around. Cocks began to crow, suddenly awakened birds fluttered up and down their cages, parroquets and cockatoos opened their sleepy eyes and mechanically repeated " Pretty Polly ! " and " Good night ! good night ! " Even the rabbits stared solemnly from behind the bars.

" What have you got there ? " said Trelyon to his guide, pointing to a railway

milk-can which stood in the corner, nearly filled with earth.

“A mole, sir,” said Mrs. Finch; “it is a plaything of one of my boys; but I could let you have it, sir, if you have any curiosity that way.”

“Why, bless you, I’ve had ’em by the dozen. I don’t know how many I’ve let escape into our kitchen-garden, all with a string tied to their leg. Don’t they go down a cracker if you let ’em loose for a second! I should say that fellow in there was rather disgusted when he came to the tin, don’t you think? Got any cardinals, Mrs. Finch? I lost every one o’ them you sent me.”

“Dear, dear me!” said Mrs. Finch, showing very great concern.

“Ay, you may well say that. Every one o’ them, and about forty more birds besides, before I found out what it was—an infernal weasel that had made its way

into the rockwork of my aviary, and there he lived at his ease for nearly a fortnight, just killing whatever he chose, and the beggar seemed to have a fancy for the prettiest birds. I had to pull the whole place to pieces before I found him out—and there he was, grinning and snarling in a corner. By Jove! didn't I hit him a whack with a stick I had! There were no more birds for him in this world."

At this moment Mrs. Finch's husband and two of her small boys came downstairs; and very soon the conversation on natural history became general, each one anxious to give his experiences of the wonderful things he had observed, even if his travels had carried him no further than Battersea Reaches. Master Harry forgot that he had left a hansom at the door. There was scarcely an animal in this dungeon that he did not examine; and when he suddenly discovered that it was considerably past

eleven o'clock, he found himself the owner of about as much property as would have filled two cabs. He went upstairs, dismissed the hansom, and got a four-wheeler, in which he deposited the various cages, fish-globes, and what not, that he had bought; and then he drove off to his hotel, getting all the waiters in the place to assist in carrying these various objects tenderly upstairs. Thus ended his first evening in London, the chief result of which was that his sitting-room had assumed the appearance of a bird-catcher's window.

Next forenoon he walked up into Hyde Park to have a look at the horses. Among the riders he recognized several people whom he knew—some of them, indeed, related to him—but he was careful to take no notice of them.

“Those women,” he said to himself, in a sensible manner, “don't want to recognize a fellow who has a wide-awake on. They

would do it, though, if you presented yourself; and they would ask you to lunch or to tea in the afternoon. Then you'd find yourself among a lot of girls, all with their young men about them, and the young men would wonder how the dickens you came to be in a shooting-coat in London."

So he pursued his way, and at length found himself in the Zoological Gardens. He sat for nearly an hour staring at the lions and tigers, imagining all sorts of incidents as he looked at their sleepy and cruel eyes, and wondering what one splendid fellow would do if he went down and stroked his nose. He had the satisfaction, also, of seeing the animals fed; and he went round with the man, and had an interesting conversation with him.

Then he went and had some luncheon himself, and got into talk with the amiable young lady who waited on him, who expressed in generous terms, with a few

superfluous *h's*, the pleasure which she derived from going to the theatre.

“Oh, do you like it?” he said, carelessly; “I never go. I always fall asleep—country habits, you know. But you get somebody to go with you, and I’ll send you a couple of places for to-morrow night, if you like.”

“I think I could get some one to take me,” said the young lady, with a pretty little simper.

“Yes, I should think you could,” he said, bluntly. “What’s your name?”

He wrote it down on one of his own cards, and went his way.

The next place of entertainment he visited was an American bowling-alley, in the neighbourhood of Covent Garden, a highly respectable place to which gentlemen resorted for the purpose of playing a refined sort of skittles. Master Harry merely wanted to practise, and also to stretch his

arms and legs. He had just begun, however, to send the big balls crashing into the pins at the further end of the long alley, when the only visitor in the place—a sailor-looking person, with a red face, who was smoking a very elaborate meerschaum—offered to play a game with him.

“All right,” said Trelyon.

“For a couple of bob?” says the stranger.

“Do you mean two shillings?” asks the young man, calmly looking down upon the person with the red face; for, of course, Harry Trelyon never used slang.

“Yes,” said the other, with much indifference, as he selected one of the balls.

They played a game, and Trelyon won easily. They played another, and again he won. They played a third, and still he won.

“Oh, let’s play for a sovereign,” said the stranger.

“No,” said the young man; “I’m going.”

Well, this did not at all seem to suit his opponent, who became rather demonstrative in manner. He did not like gentlemen coming in to win money, without giving a fellow a chance of winning it back. At this, Trelyon turned suddenly—he had not yet put on his coat—and said :

“What do you mean? I won’t play any more, but I’ll knock the head off you in two minutes, if that’ll suit you better.”

The gentleman with the red face paused for a minute. He was evidently in a nasty temper. He looked at the build of the young man; he also observed that one of the assistants was drawing near; and still he said nothing. Whereupon Master Harry quietly put on his coat, lit a cigar, gave a friendly nod to his late opponent, and walked out.

In this wise he lounged about London for a day or two, looking in at Tattersall’s, examining new breechloaders in shops in

St. James's Street, purchasing ingenuities in fishing-tackle, and very frequently feeding the ducks in the Serpentine with bread bought of the boys standing round. It was not a very lively sort of existence, he found. Colonel Ransome had left for Scotland on the very day before his arrival in London, so that peaceable and orderly means of getting that dowry for Wenna Rosewarne were not at hand; and Master Harry, though he was enough of a devil-may-care, had no intention of going to the Jews for the money until he was driven to that. Colonel Ransome, moreover, had left his constituents unrepresented in the House during the last few days of the session, and had quietly gone off to Scotland for the 12th, so that it was impossible to say when he might return. Meanwhile young Trelyon made the acquaintance of whatever birds, beasts, and fishes he could find in London, until he got a little tired.

All of a sudden it struck him one evening, as a happy relief, that he would sit down and write to Wenna Rosewarne. He ordered in pens, ink, and paper with much solemnity; and then he said to the old waiter, "Tomlins, how do you spell 'retriever'?"

"I ain't quite sure, sir," Tomlins said.

Whereupon Master Harry had to begin and compose that letter which we have already read, but which cost him an amount of labour not visible in the lines as they stand. He threw away a dozen sheets of paper before he even mastered a beginning; and it was certainly an hour and a half before he had produced a copy which more or less satisfied him. Mr. Roscorla noticed at once the pains he had taken with the writing.

Then in due course came the answer; and Master Harry paused with much satisfaction to look at the pretty handwriting on

the envelope—he did not often get letters from young ladies. The contents, however, did not please him quite so much. They were these:—

“Eglosilyn, August 3, 18—.

“DEAR MR. TRELYON,

“Thank you very much for giving me your beautiful dog. I shall take great care of him, and if you want him for the shooting you can have him at any time. But I am surprised you should write to me when I hear that you have not written to your own relatives, and that they do not even know where you are. I cannot understand how you should be so careless of the feelings of others. I am sure it is thoughtlessness rather than selfishness on your part; but I hope you will write to them at once. Mr. Barnes has just called, and I have given him your address.

“I am, yours sincerely,

“WENNA ROSEWARNE.”

Harry Trelyon was at once vexed and pleased by this letter; probably more vexed than pleased, for he threw it impatiently on the table, and said to himself, "She's always reading lectures to people, and always making a fuss of nothing. She was meant for a Puritan—she should have gone out in the *Mayfly* to America."

Mayfly for *Mayflower* was perhaps a natural mistake for a trout-fisher to make: but Master Harry was unaware of it. He passed on to more gloomy fancies. What was this parson about that he should come inquiring for his address of Wenna Rosewarne? How had he found out that she knew it?

"Come," said he to himself, "this won't do. I must go down to Cornwall. And if there are any spies pushing their noses into my affairs, let 'em look out for a tweak, that's all!"

CHAPTER XI.

THE TWO PICTURES.

“Oh, Mabyn,” Wenna called out in despair, “you will have all my hair down. Have you gone quite mad?”

“Yes, quite,” the younger sister said, with a wild enjoyment in her eyes. “Oh, Wenna, he’s gone, he’s gone, and he’s gone to get you an emerald ring! Don’t you know, you poor silly thing, that green’s forsaken, and yellow’s forsworn?”

“Well, Mabyn,” the elder sister said, laughing in spite of herself, “you are the wickedest girl I ever heard of, and I wonder I am not angry with you.”

At this moment they were returning to

Eglosilyan along the Launceston highway ; and far away behind them, on the road that crosses the bleak and lofty moors, the dog-cart was faintly visible which was taking Mr. Roscorla on his first stage towards London. He had driven the two sisters out for about a mile, and now they were going back ; and Mabyn was almost beside herself with delight that he was gone, and that her sister had shown no great grief at his going. Their parting, indeed, had been of a most unromantic kind, much to the relief of both. Mr. Roscorla was rather late ; and Wenna devoted her last words to impressing on him that he must have something to eat in Launceston before going down to the Plymouth train. Then she bade him make haste, and said good-bye with a kindly smile on her face, and away he went.

“ Mabyn,” she said in a mysterious voice, which stopped her sister’s pulling her about, “ do you think—now do you

really think—Mr. Pavy would lend us his boat?”

“Oh, Wenna,” the other one cried, “do let us have the boat out! Do you know that the whole air seems clear and light since Mr. Roscorla has gone? I should like to thank everybody in the world for being so kind as to take him away. Wenna, I’ll run you to the gate of Basset Cottage for half-a-crown!”

“You!” said the elder sister, with great contempt. “I’ll run you to the mill for a hundred thousand pounds.”

“No, Wenna—Basset Cottage, if you like,” said Mabyn, sturdily; and with that both the girls set out, with their heads down, in a business-like fashion that showed there was very little the matter with their lungs.

“Oh, Mabyn!” said Wenna, suddenly; and then both of them found that they had very nearly run into the arms of a clergy-

man—an elderly, white-haired, amiable-looking gentleman, who was rather slowly toiling up the hill. Mabyn looked frightened, and then laughed; but Wenna, with her cheeks very red, went forward and shook hands with him.

“Well, girls,” he said, “you needn’t stop running for me—a capital exercise, a capital exercise, that young ladies in towns don’t have much of. And as for you, Wenna, you’ve plenty of work of a sedentary nature, you know—nothing better than a good race, nothing better.”

“And how is your little granddaughter this morning, Mr. Trewhella?” said Wenna, gently, with her cheeks still flushing with the running.

“Ah! well, poor child, she is much about the same; but the pin-cushion is nearly finished now, and your name is on it in silver beads, and you are to come and have tea with her as soon as you can, that she may give it

to you. Dear, dear! she was asking her mother yesterday whether the beads would carry all her love to you, for she did not think it possible herself. Well, good-bye, girls; don't you be ashamed of having a race together," with which the kindly-faced clergyman resumed his task of ascending the hill, and the two girls, abandoning their racing, walked quickly down to the harbour, to see if they could persuade the silent and surly Mr. Pavy to let them have his boat.

Meanwhile Mr. Roscorla drove along the silent highway in George Rosewarne's dog-cart, and in due time he reached Launceston, and took the train for Plymouth. He stayed in Plymouth that night, having some business to do there; and next morning he found himself in the *Flying Dutchman*, tearing along the iron rails towards London.

Now it was a fixed habit of Mr. Roscorla to try to get as near as possible to a clear and definite understanding of his relations

with the people and things around him. He did not wish to have anything left vague and nebulous, even as regarded a mere sentiment; and as this was the first time he had got clear away from Eglosilyan and the life there since the beginning of his engagement, he calmly set about defining the position in which he stood with regard to Wenna Rosewarne.

The chief matter for discontent that he had was the probable wonder of the world over the fact that he meant to marry an innkeeper's daughter. All the world could not know the sufficient reasons he had advanced to himself for that step; nor could they know of the very gradual way in which he had approached it. Every one would consider it as an abrupt and ludicrous act of folly; his very kindest friends would call it an odd freak of romance. Now Mr. Roscorla felt that at his time of life to be accused of romance was to be accused of

silliness ; and he resolved that, whenever he had a chance, he would let people know that his choice of Wenna Rosewarne was dictated by the most simple and commonplace arguments of prudence, such as would govern the conduct of any sane man.

He resolved, too, that he would clearly impress on Harry Trelyon—whom he expected to see at Nolan's—that this project of marriage with Miss Rosewarne was precisely what a man of the world placed in his position would entertain. He did not wholly like Master Harry. There was an ostentatious air of youth about the young man. There was a bluntness in his speech, too, that transgressed the limits of courtesy. Nor did he quite admire the off-handed fashion in which Harry Trelyon talked to the Rosewarne, and more especially to the girls ; he wished Miss Wenna Rosewarne, at least, to be treated with a little more formality and respect. At the same

time, he would endeavour to remain good friends with this ill-mannered boy, for reasons to be made apparent.

When he arrived at Nolan's Hotel he took a bed-room there, and then sent in a card to Harry Trelyon. He found that young gentleman up on a chair, trying to catch a Virginian nightingale that had escaped from one of the cages; and he nearly stumbled over a tame hedgehog that ran pattering over the carpet, because his attention was drawn to a couple of very long-eared rabbits sitting in an easy-chair. Master Harry paid no attention to him until the bird was caught; then he came down, shook hand with him carelessly, and said—

“How odd you should stumble in here! Or did Wenna Rosewarne tell you I was at Nolan's?”

“Yes, Miss Rosewarne did,” said Mr. Roscorla. “You have quite a menagerie here. Do you dine here or downstairs?”

“ Oh ! here, of course.”

“ I thought you might come and dine with me this evening at my club. Five minutes' walk from here, you know. Will you ? ”

“ Yes, I will, if you don't mind this elegant costume.”

Mr. Roscorla was precisely the person to mind the dress of a man whom he was taking into his club ; but he was very well aware that, whatever dress young Trelyon wore, no one could mistake him for anything else than a gentleman. He was not at all averse to be seen with Master Harry in this rough costume ; he merely suggested, with a smile, that a few feathers and bits of thread might be removed ; and then, in the quiet summer evening, they went outside and walked westward.

“ Now this is the time,” Mr. Roscorla said, “ when Pall Mall looks interesting to me. There is a sort of quiet and strong

excitement about it. All that smoke there over the club chimneys tells of the cooking going forward; and you will find old boys having a sly look in at the dining-room to see that their tables are all right; and then friends come in, and smooth out their white ties, and have a drop of sherry and Angostura bitters while they wait. All this district is full of a silent satisfaction and hope just now. But I can't get you a good dinner, Trelyon; you'll have to take your chance, you know. I have got out of the ways of the club now; I don't know what they can do."

"Well, I'm not nasty partickler," Trelyon said, which was true. "But what has brought you up to London?"

"Well, I'll tell you. It's rather an awkward business one way. I have got a share in some sugar and coffee plantations in Jamaica—I think you know that—and you are aware that the emancipation of the

niggers simply cut the throat of the estates there. The beggars won't work; and lots of the plantations have been going down and down, or rather back and back into the original wilderness. Well, my partners here see no way out of it but one—to import labour, have the plantations thoroughly overhauled and set in good working order. But that wants money. They have got money—I haven't; and so, to tell you the truth, I am at my wit's end as how to raise a few thousands to join them in the undertaking."

This piece of intelligence rather startled Harry Trelyon. He instantly recalled the project which had brought himself to London, and asked himself whether he was prepared to give a sum of £5,000 to Wenna Rosewarne, merely that it should be transferred by her to her husband, who would forthwith embark in speculation with it. Well, he was not prepared to do that off-hand.

They went into the club, which was in St. James's Street, and Mr. Roscorla ordered a quiet little dinner, the *menu* of which was constructed with a neatness and skill altogether thrown away on his guest. In due time Master Harry sat down at the small table, and accepted with much indifference the delicacies which his companion had prepared for him. But all the same he enjoyed his dinner—particularly a draught of ale he had with his cheese; after which the two strangers went up to a quiet corner in the smoking-room, lay down in a couple of big easy-chairs, and lit their cigars. During dinner their talk had mostly been about shooting, varied with anecdotes which Mr. Roscorla told of men about town.

Now, however, Mr. Roscorla became more communicative about his own affairs; and it seemed to Trelyon that these were rather in a bad way. And it also occurred

to him that there was perhaps a little meanness in his readiness to give £5,000 direct to Wenna Rosewarne, and in his disinclination to lend the same sum to her future husband, whose interests of course would be hers.

“Look here, Roscorla,” he said. “Honour bright, do you think you can make anything out of this scheme; or is the place like one of those beastly old mines in which you throw good money after bad?”

Roscorla answered, honestly enough—but with perhaps a trifle unnecessary emphasis, when he saw that the young man was inclined to accept the hint—that he believed the project to be a sound one; that his partners were putting far more money into it than he would; that the merchants who were his agents in London knew the property and approved of the scheme; and that, if he could raise the

money, he would himself go out, in a few months' time, to see the thing properly started.

He did not press the matter further than that for the present; and so their talk drifted away into other channels, until it found its way back to Eglosilyan, to the Rosewarnes, and to Wenna. That is to say, Mr. Roscorla spoke of Wenna; Trelyon was generally silent on that one point.

"You must not imagine," Roscorla said, with a smile, "that I took this step without much deliberation."

"So did she, I suppose," Trelyon said, rather coldly.

"Well, yes. Doubtless. But I dare say many people will think it rather strange that I should marry an innkeeper's daughter—they will think I have been struck with a sudden fit of idiotic romance."

"Oh no, I don't think so," the lad said, with nothing visible in his face to tell

whether he was guilty of a mere blunder or of intentional impertinence. "Many elderly gentlemen marry their housekeepers, and in most cases wisely, as far as I have seen."

"Oh! but that is another thing," Roscorla said, with his face flushing slightly, and inclined to be ill-tempered. "There is a great difference: I am not old enough to want a nurse yet. I have chosen Miss Rosewarne because she is possessed of certain qualities calculated to make her an agreeable companion for a man like myself. I have done it quite deliberately and with my eyes open. I am not blinded by the vanity that makes a boy insist on having a particular girl become his wife because she has a pretty face and he wants to show her to his friends."

"And yet there is not much the matter with Wenna Rosewarne's face," said Trelyon, with the least suggestion of sarcasm.

“Oh! as for that,” Roscorla said, “that does not concern a man who looks at life from my point of view. Certainly, there are plainer faces than Miss Rosewarne’s. She has good eyes and teeth; and besides that, she has a good figure, you know.”

Both these men, as they lay idling in this smoking-room, were now thinking of Wenna Rosewarne, and indolently and inadvertently forming some picture of her in their minds. Of the two, that of Mr. Roscorla was by far the more accurate. He could have described every feature of her face and every article of her dress, as she appeared to him on bidding him good-bye the day before on the Launceston highway. The dress was a soft light-brown, touched here and there with deep and rich cherry colour. Her face was turned sideways to him, and looking up; the lips partly open with a friendly smile, and showing beautiful teeth; the earnest

dark eyes filled with a kindly regard; the eyebrows high, so that they gave a timid and wondering look to the face; the forehead low and sweet, with some loose brown hair about it that the wind stirred. He knew every feature of that face and every varying look of the eyes, whether they were pleased and grateful, or sad and distant, or overbrimming with a humorous and malicious fun. He knew the shape of her hands, the graceful poise of her waist and neck, the very way she put down her foot in walking. He was thoroughly well aware of the appearance which the girl he meant to marry presented to the unbiassed eyes of the world.

Harry Trelyon's mental picture of her was far more vague and unsatisfactory. Driven into a corner, he would have admitted to you that Wenna Rosewarne was not very good-looking; but that would not have affected his fixed and private belief

that he knew no woman who had so beautiful and tender a face. For somehow, when he thought of her, he seemed to see her, as he had often seen her, go by him on a summer morning on her way to church; and as the sweet small Puritan would turn to him, and say in her gentle way, "Good morning, Mr. Trelyon," he would feel vexed and ashamed that he had been found with a gun in his hand, and be inclined to heave it into the nearest ditch. Then she would go on her way, along between the green hedges, in the summer light; and the look of her face that remained in his memory was as the look of an angel, calm, and sweet, and never to be forgotten.

"Of course," said Mr. Roscorla in this smoking-room, "if I go to Jamaica, I must get married before I start."

CHAPTER XII.

THE CHAIN TIGHTENS.

ONCE, and once only, Wenna broke down. She had gone out into the night all by herself, with some vague notion that the cold, dank sea-air—sweet with the scent of the roses in the cottage-gardens—would be gratefully cool as it came around her face. The day had been stormy, and the sea was high—she could hear the waves dashing in on the rocks at the mouth of the harbour—but the heavens were clear, and over the dark earth the great vault of stars throbbed and burned in silence. She was alone, for Mr. Roscorla had not returned from London, and Mabyn had not noticed her slipping

out. And here, in the cool, sweet darkness, the waves seemed to call on her with a low and melancholy voice. A great longing and trouble came somehow into her heart, and drove her to wander onwards as if she should find rest in the mere loneliness of the night, until at length there was nothing around her but the dark land, and the sea, and the white stars.

She could not tell what wild and sad feeling this was that had taken possession of her; but she knew that she had suddenly fallen away from the calm content of the wife that was to be—with all the pleasant sensation of gratitude towards him who had honoured her, and the no less pleasant consciousness that her importance in the world, and her power of helping the people around her, were indefinitely increased. She had become again the plain Jim Crow of former days, longing to be able to do some indefinitely noble and unselfish thing—

ready, indeed, to lay her life down so that she might earn some measure of kindly regard by the sacrifice. And once more she reflected that she had no great influence in the world, that she was of no account to anybody, that she was plain, and small, and insignificant; and the great desire in her heart of being of distinct and beautiful service to the many people whom she loved, seemed to break itself against these narrow bars, until the cry of the sea around her was a cry of pain, and the stars looked coldly down on her, and even God himself seemed far away and indifferent.

“If I could only tell some one—if I could only tell some one!” she was saying to herself wildly, as she walked rapidly onwards, not seeing very well where she was going, for her eyes were full of tears. “But if I tell Mabyn she will say that I fear this marriage, and go straight to Mr. Roscorla; and if I tell my mother she will think me

ungrateful to him, and to every one around me. And how can I explain to them what I cannot explain to myself? And if I cannot explain it to myself, is it not mere folly to yield to such a feeling? ”

The question was easily asked, and easily answered; and with much show of bravery she proceeded to ask herself other questions, less easily answered. She began to reproach herself with ingratitude, with vanity, with a thousand errors and evil qualities; she would teach herself humility; she would endeavour to be contented and satisfied in the position in which she found herself; she would reflect on the thousands of miserable people who had real reason to complain, and yet bore their sufferings with fortitude; and she would now—straightway and at once—return to her own room, get out the first letter Mr. Roscorla had written to her, and convince herself once more that she ought to be happy.

The climax was a strange one. She had been persuading herself that there was no real cause for this sudden fit of doubt and wretchedness. She had been anticipating her sister's probable explanation, and dismissing it. And yet, as she turned and walked back along the narrow path leading down to the bridge, she comforted herself with the notion that Mr. Roscorla's letter would reassure her and banish these imaginary sorrows. She had frequently read over that letter, and she knew that its ingenious and lucid arguments were simply incontrovertible.

"Oh, Wenna!" Mabyn cried, "what has been troubling you? Do you know that your face is quite white? Have you been out all by yourself?"

Wenna, on getting home, had gone into the little snugery which was once a bar, and which was now George Rosewarne's smoking-room. Mabyn and her father had

been playing chess—the board and pieces were still on the table. Wenna sate down, apparently a little tired.

“Yes, I have been out for a walk,” she said.

“Wenna, tell me what is the matter with you!” the younger sister said, imperatively.

“There is nothing the matter. Well, I suppose you will tease me until I tell you something. I have had a fit of despondency, Mabyn, and that’s all—despondency, over nothing; and now I am quite cured, and do you think Jennifer could get me a cup of tea? Well, why do you stare? Is there anything wonderful in it? I suppose every girl must get frightened a little bit when she thinks of all that may happen to her—especially when she is alone—and of course it is very ungrateful of her to have any such doubts, though they mean nothing, and she ought to be ashamed——”

She stopped suddenly. To her dismay she found that she was admitting to Mabyn the very reasons which she expected to have to combat. She saw what she had done in the expression of Mabyn's face—in the proud, indignant mouth and the half-concealed anger of the eyes. The younger sister was silent for a minute; and then she said, passionately—

“If there's any one to be ashamed, it isn't you, Wemma. I know who it is. As for you, I don't know what has come over you of late—you are trying to be meeker and meeker, and more humble, and more grateful—and all for what? What have you to be grateful for? And you are losing all your fun and your good spirits; and you are getting to be just like children in the story-books, that repeat texts and get gooder and gooder every day until they are only fit for Heaven; and I am sure I am always glad when the little

beasts die. Oh, Wenna, I would rather see you do the wickedest thing in all the world if it would only bring you back to your old self!"

"Why, you foolish girl, I am my old self," the elder sister said, quietly taking off her bonnet and laying it on the table. "Is Jennifer up-stairs? Who is in the parlour?"

"Oh, your sweetheart is in the parlour," said Mabyn, with badly-concealed contempt. "He is just arrived from London. I suppose he is telling mother about his rheumatism."

"He hasn't got any rheumatism—any more than you have," Wenna said, with some asperity.

"Oh yes, he has," the younger sister said, inventing a diabolical story for the mere purpose of getting Wenna into a rage. She would rather have her in a succession of tempers than the victim of this chas-

tened meekness. "And gout too—I can see by the colour of his nails. Of course he hasn't told you, for you're such a simpleton, he takes advantage of you. And he is near-sighted, but he pretends he doesn't need spectacles. And I am told he has fearful debts hanging over his head in London, and that he only came here to hide; and if you marry him you'll see what will come to you."

Mabyn was not very successful in making her sister angry. Wenna only laughed in her gentle fashion, and put her light shawl beside her bonnet, and then went along the passage to the parlour in which Mr. Roscorla and her mother were talking.

The meeting of the lovers after their temporary separation was not an impassioned one. They shook hands; Wenna hoped he was not fatigued by the long journey; and then he resumed his task of describing to Mrs. Rosewarne the ex-

traordinary appearance of Trelyon's sitting-room in Nolans's Hotel, after the young gentleman had filled it with birds and beasts. Presently, however, Wenna's mother made some pretence for getting out of the room; and Mr. Roscorla and his betrothed were left alone. He rarely got such an opportunity.

“Wenna, I have brought you the ring,” said he; and with that he took a small case from his pocket, and opened it, and produced a very pretty gypsy ring studded with emeralds.

Now, on the journey down from London he had definitely resolved that he would put an end to that embarrassment or shame-facedness which had hitherto prevented his offering to kiss the girl whom he expected to marry. He was aware that there was something ridiculous in his not having done so. He reflected that scarcely any human being would believe that he could have been

such a fool. And it occurred to him, in the train, that the occasion of his giving Wenna her engaged ring would be an excellent opportunity for breaking in upon this absurd delicacy.

He went across the room to her. She sate still, perhaps a little paler than usual. He took her hand, and put the ring on, and then——

Then it suddenly occurred to him that there was something devilish in the notion of his purchasing the right to kiss her by giving her a trinket. Not that any such scruple would otherwise have affected him; but he was nervously sensitive as to what she might think; and doubtless she was familiar with the story of Margarethe and Faust's casket of jewels. So he suddenly said, with an air of carelessness——

“Well, do you like it? You can't quite tell the colour of the stones by lamplight, you know.”

Wenna was not thinking of the colour of the stones. Her hand trembled ; her heart beat quickly ; when she did manage to answer him, it was merely to say, in a confused fashion, that she thought the ring very beautiful indeed.

“ You know,” he said, with a laugh, “ I don’t think men like engaged rings quite as well as girls do. A girl generally seems to take such a fancy for an engaged ring that she won’t change it for any other. I hope that won’t be in your case, Wenna ; and, indeed, I wanted to talk to you about it.”

He brought a chair close to her, and sate down by her, and took her hand. Now, ordinarily Wenna’s small, white, plump hands were so warm that her sister used to say that they tingled to the very tips of her fingers with kindness, and were always wanting to give away something. The hand which Mr. Roscorla held was as cold and as impassive as ice. He did not

notice it: he was engaged in preparing sentences.

“You know, Wenna,” said he, “that I am not a rich man. When I might have taught myself to work I had just sufficient income to keep me idle; and now that this income is growing less, and when I have greater claims on it, I must try something. Well, my partners and myself have thought of a scheme which I think will turn out all right. They propose to wake up those estates in Jamaica, and see if they can’t be made to produce something like what they used to produce. That wants money. They have it: I have not. It is true I have been offered the loan of a few thousand pounds; but even if I accept it—and I suppose I must—that would not put me on an equal footing with the other men who are going into the affair. This, however, I could do: I could go out there and do all in my power to look after their interests and my own—

see, in fact, that the money was being properly expended, before it was too late. Now, I might be there a very long time."

"Yes," said Wenna, in a low voice, and rather inappropriately.

"Now, don't let me alarm you; but do you think—do you not think, in view of what might be rather a long separation, that we ought to get married before I go?"

She suddenly and inadvertently withdrew her hand.

"But don't make any mistake, Wenna," he said; "I did not propose you should go with me. That would be asking too much. I don't wish to take you to the West Indies; because I might be there only for a few months. All I wish is to have the bond that unites us already made fast before I go, merely as a comfortable thing to think of, don't you see?"

"Oh, it is too hasty—I am afraid—why should we be in such a hurry?" the girl

said, still with her heart beating so that she could scarcely speak.

“No,” he argued, “you must not make another mistake. Before this scheme can be matured, months must elapse. I may not have to go out before the beginning of next year. Now, surely other six months would make a sufficiently long engagement.”

“Oh, but the pledge is so terrible,” she said, and scarcely knowing what she said.

Mr. Roscorla was at once astonished and vexed. That was certainly not the mood in which a girl ought to look forward to her marriage. He could not understand this dread on her part. He began to ask himself whether she would like to enjoy the self-importance that her engagement had bestowed on her—the attentions he paid her, the assistance he gave her in her charitable labours, and the sort of sovereignty over a man which a girl enjoys during the

betrothal period—for an indefinite time, or perhaps with the hope that the sudden destruction of all these things by marriage might never arrive at all. Then he began to get a little angry, and got up from the chair, and walked once or twice up and down the room.

“Well,” said he, “I don’t understand you, I confess. Except in this way, that our relations with each other have not been so openly affectionate as they might have been. That I admit. Perhaps it was my fault. I suppose, for example, you have been surprised that I never offered to kiss you?”

There was something almost of a threat in the last few words; and Wenna, with her cheeks suddenly burning red, anxiously hastened to say—

“Oh, not at all. It was my fault. I am sure if there was too great reserve it was my fault; but I do not think there has

been. It is not that at all; but your wish seems so sudden, and so unnecessary."

"Don't you see," he said, interrupting her, "that if our relations at present are not sufficiently frank and confidential, nothing will mend that so easily as our marriage? And this that I ask of you ought to be as agreeable to you as to me—that is to say——"

He stopped, with a look of impatience on his face. There was some one coming along the passage. He knew who it was, too; for a young girl's voice was doing its best to imitate in a burlesque fashion a young man's voice; and Mr. Roscorla had already heard Harry Trelyon, as he rode or drove carelessly along, bawling to himself, "Oh, the men of merry, merry England!" He knew that his old enemy Mabyn was at hand.

That very clever imitation of Harry Trelyon was all the warning that the young

lady in question condescended to give of her approach. She opened the door without ceremony, marched into the middle of the room, and proudly placed a bird-cage on the table.

“There,” said she, “can either of you tell me what that bird is?”

“Of course I can,” said Wenna, rising with a sensation of great relief.

“No you can’t,” her sister said dogmatically. “It is sent to you with Mr. Harry Trelyon’s compliments; and it is something very wonderful indeed. What is it, ladies and gentlemen? Don’t answer all at once!”

“Why, it is only——”

“A piping bullfinch—that’s what it is,” said Mabyu, triumphantly.

CHAPTER XIII.

AN UNEXPECTED CONVERT.

NEXT morning was Sunday morning; and Wenna, having many things to think over by herself, started off alone to church, some little time before the others, and chose a circuitous route to the small building which stands on the high uplands over the sea. It was a beautiful morning, still and peaceful, with the warmth of the sunlight cooled by a refreshing western breeze; and as she went along and up the valley, her heart gradually forgot its cares, for she was listening to the birds singing, and picking up an occasional wild-flower, or watching the slow white clouds cross the blue sky. And as she walked quietly along in this way, finding

her life the sweeter for the sweet air and the abundant colour and brightness of all the things around her, it chanced that she saw Harry Trelyon coming across one of the meadows, evidently with the intention of bidding her good-morning; and she thought she would stop and thank him for having sent her the bullfinch. This she did very prettily when he came up; and he, with something of a blush on his handsome face, said—

“I thought you wouldn’t be offended. One can use more freedom with you now that you are as good as married, you know.”

She quickly got away from that subject by asking him whether he was coming to church; and to that question he replied by a rather scornful laugh, and by asking what the parsons would say if he took a gun into the family pew. In fact, he had brought out an air-cane to test its carrying powers; and he now bore it over his shoulder.

“I think you might have left the gun at home on a Sunday morning,” Miss Wenna said, in rather a precise fashion. “And, do you know, Mr. Trelyon, I can’t understand why you should speak in that way about clergymen, when you say yourself that you always avoid them, and don’t know anything about them. It reminds me of a stable-boy we once had who used to amuse the other lads by being impertinent to every stranger who might pass, simply because the stranger was a stranger.”

This was a deadly thrust; and the tall young gentleman flushed, and was obviously a trifle angry. Did she mean to convey that he had acquired his manners from stable-boys?

“Parsons and churches are too good for the likes o’ me,” he said, contemptuously. “’Morning, Miss Rosewarne,” and with that he walked off.

But about three minutes thereafter,

when she was peacefully continuing her way, he overtook her again, and said to her, in rather a shamefaced fashion—

“I hope you don’t think I meant to be rude to you, Miss Wenna. I’ll go to church with you if you like. I’ve stuck my air-cane in a safe place.”

Wenna’s face brightened.

“I shall be very glad,” she said, with a smile far more frank and friendly than any she had ever yet bestowed on him. “And I am sure if you came often to hear Mr. Trewhella, or if you knew him, you would think differently about clergymen.”

“Oh, well,” Trelyon said, “he’s a good sort of old chap, I think. I find no fault with him. But look at such a fellow as that Barnes—why, that fellow’s son was with me at Rugby, and wasn’t he a pretty chip of the old block—a mean, lying little beggar, who would do anything to get a half-crown out of you.”

“Oh, were you at Rugby?” Wenna asked, innocently.

“I don’t wonder at your asking,” her companion said, with a grin. “You think it doesn’t look as if I had ever been to any school? Oh yes, I was at Rugby; and my career there, if brief, was not inglorious. I think the records of all the eight Houses might be searched in vain to find such another ruflian as I was, or any one who managed to get into the same number of scrapes in the same time. The end was dramatic. They wouldn’t let me go to a ball in the town-hall. I had vowed I should be there; and I got out of the House at night, and went. And I hadn’t been in the place ten minutes when I saw the very master who had refused me fix his glittering eye on me; so, as I knew it was all over, I merely went up to him and asked to have the pleasure of being introduced to his daughter. I thought he’d have had a fit.

But that little brute Barnes I was telling you about, he was our champion bun-eater. At that time, you know, they used to give you as many buns as ever you liked on Shrove-Tuesday: and the Houses used to eat against each other, and this fellow Barnes was our champion; and, oh Lord! the number he stowed away that morning. When we went to chapel afterwards, he was as green as a leek."

"But do you dislike clergymen because Master Barnes ate too many buns?" Wenna asked, with a gentle smile, which rather aggrieved her companion.

"Do you know," said he, "I think you are awfully hard on me. You are always trying to catch me up. Here am I walking to church with you, like an angel of submission, and all the thanks I get—— Why, there goes my mother!"

Just in front of them, and a short distance from the church, the road they

were following joined the main highway leading up from Eglosilyan, and along the latter Mrs. Trelyon's brougham was driving past. That lady was very much astonished to find her son walking with Miss Wenna Rosewarne on a Sunday morning; and still more surprised when, after she was in church, she beheld Master Harry walk coolly in and march up to the family pew. Here, indeed, was a revolution. Which of all the people assembled—among whom were Miss Mabyn and her mother, and Mr. Roscorla—had ever seen the like of this before? And it was all the greater wonder, that the young gentleman in the rough shooting-coat found two clergymen in the pew, and nevertheless entered it, and quietly accepted from one of them a couple of books.

Mrs. Trelyon's gentle and emotional heart warmed towards the girl who had done this thing.

That forenoon, just before luncheon, Mrs. Trelyon found her son in the library, and said to him, with an unusual kindness of manner—

“That was Miss Rosewarne, Harry, wasn’t it, whom I saw this morning?”

“Yes,” he said, sulkily. He half expected that one or other of his friends, the parsons, had been saying something about her to his mother.

“She is a very quiet, nice-looking girl; I am sure Mr. Roscorla has acted wisely, after all. And I have been thinking, Harry, that since she is a friend of yours, we might do something like what you proposed, only not in a way to make people talk.”

“Oh,” said he, “I have done it already. I have promised to lend Roscorla 5,000*l.* to help him to work his Jamaica estates. If you don’t like to sanction the affair, I can get the money from the Jews. I have written to Colonel Ransome to tell him so.”

“Now why should you treat me so, Harry?” his mother said.

“I took you at your word—that’s all. I suppose now you are better disposed to the girl merely because she got me to go to church this morning. If there were more people like her about churches, in the pulpits and out of them, I’d go oftener.”

“I was not quite sure who she was,” Mrs. Trelyon said, with a feeble air of apology. “I like her appearance very much; and I wish she or anybody else would induce you to go to church. Well now, Harry, I will myself lend you the 5,000*l.* till you come of age. Surely that will be much better; and, if you like, I will make Miss Rosewarne’s acquaintance. You might ask her to dinner the first time Mr. Rosecorla is coming; and he could bring her.”

Master Harry was at last pacified.

“Make it Thursday,” said he, “and you

will write to her, won't you? I will take down the letter and persuade her; but if she comes she shan't come under the wing of Mr. Roscorla, as if he were the means of introducing her. I shall go down for her with the brougham, and fetch her myself."

"But what will Mr. Roscorla say to that?" his mother asked, with a smile.

"Mr. Roscorla may say whatever he particularly pleases," responded Master Harry.

CHAPTER XIV.

“SIE BAT SO SANFT, SO LIEBLICH.”

“To dine at Trelyon Hall?” said George Rosewarne to his eldest daughter, when she in a manner asked his consent. “Why not? But you must get a new dress, lass; we can’t have you go among grand folks as Jim Crow.”

“But there is a story about the crow that went out with peacock’s feathers,” his daughter said to him. “And, besides, how could I get a new dress by Thursday?”

“How could you get a new dress by Thursday?” her father repeated mechanically, for he was watching one of his pet pigeons on the roof of the mill. “How can

I tell you? Go and ask your mother. Don't bother me.”

It is quite certain that Wenna would not have availed herself of this gracious permission, for her mother was not very well, and she did not wish to increase that tender anxiety which Mrs. Rosewarne already showed about her daughter's going among these strangers; but that this conversation had been overheard by Mabyn, and that young lady, as was her habit, plunged headlong into the matter.

“You can have the dress quite well, Wenna,” she said, coming out to the door of the inn, and calling on her mother to come too. “Now, look here, mother, I give you warning that I never, never, never will speak another word to Wenna if she doesn't take the silk that is lying by for me and have it made up directly: never a single word, if I live in Eglosilyan for a hundred and twenty-five years!”

“Mabyn, I don’t want a new dress,” Wenna expostulated. “I don’t need one. Why should you rush at little things as if you were a squadron of cavalry?”

“I don’t care whether you want it or whether you don’t want it; but you’ve got to have it, hasn’t she, mother? Or else, it’s what I tell you: not a word—not a word, if you were to go down before me on your bended knees.” This was said with much dramatic effect.

“I think you had better let Mabyn have her own way,” the mother said, gently.

“I let her?” Wenna answered, pretending not to notice Mabyn’s look of defiance and triumph. “She always has her own way; tomboys always have.”

“Don’t call names, Wenna,” her sister said, severely; “especially as I have just given you a dress. You’ll have to get Miss Keam down directly, or else I’ll go and cut it myself, and then you’ll have Harry

Trelyon laughing at you; for he always laughs at people who don't know how to keep him in his proper place.”

“Meaning yourself, Mabyn,” the mother said; but Mabyn was not to be crushed by any sarcasm.

Certainly Harry Trelyon was in no laughing or spiteful mood when he drove down on that Thursday evening to take Wenna Rosewarne up to the Hall. He was as pleased and proud as he well could be, and when he went into the inn he made no secret of his satisfaction and of his gratitude to her for having been good enough to accept his mother's invitation. Moreover, understanding that Mrs. Rosewarne was still rather ailing, he had brought down for her a brace of grouse from a hamper that had reached the Hall from Yorkshire that morning; and he was even friendly and good-natured to Mabyn instead of being ceremoniously impertinent towards her.

“Don’t you think, Mr. Trelyon,” said Wenna, in a timid way, as she was getting into the brougham, “don’t you think we should drive round for Mr. Roscorla?”

“Oh, certainly not,” said Maby, with promptitude. “He always prefers a walk before dinner—I know he does—he told me so. He must have started long ago. Don’t you mind her, Mr. Trelyon.”

Mr. Trelyon was grinning as he and Wenna drove away.

“She’s a thorough good sort of girl, that sister of yours,” he said; “but when she marries won’t she lead her husband a pretty dance!”

“Oh, nothing of the sort, I can assure you,” Wenna said, sharply. “She is as gentle as any one can well be. If she is impetuous, it is always in thinking of other people. There is nothing she wouldn’t do to serve those whom she really cares for.”

“Well,” said he, with a laugh, “I never knew two girls stick up so for one another. Don’t imagine I was such a fool as to say anything against her. But sisters ain’t often like that. My cousin Jue has a sister at school, and when she’s at home, the bullying that goes on is something awful; or rather it’s nagging and scratching, for girls never go in for a fair stand-up fight. And yet when you meet these two separately, you find each of them as good-natured and good-tempered as you could wish. But if there’s anything said about you anywhere that isn’t positive worship, why, Mabyn comes down on the people like a cart-load of bricks; and she can do it, mind you, when she likes.”

“Remember,” he said, after a word or two, “I mean to take you in to dinner. It is just possible my mother may ask Mr. Roscorla to take you in, as a compliment to him; but don’t you go.”

“I must do what I am told,” Wenna answered, meekly.

“Oh no, you musn’t,” he said. “That is merely a girl’s notion of what is proper. You are a woman now; you can do what you like. Don’t you know how your position is changed since you became engaged?”

“Yes, it is changed,” she said; and then she added quickly, “Surely that must be a planet that one can see already.”

“You can be much more independent in your actions now, and much more friendly with many people, don’t you know?” said this young man, who did not see that he was treading on very delicate ground, and that of all things in the world that Wenna least liked to hear spoken of, her engagement to Mr. Roscorla was the chief.

Late that night, when Wenna returned from her first dinner-party at Trelyon Hall,

she found her sister Mabyn waiting up for her, and, having properly scolded the young lady for so doing, she sat down and consented to give her an ample and minute description of all the strange things that had happened.

“Well, you must know,” said she, folding her hands on her knees as she had been used to do in telling tales to Mabyn when they were children together: “you must know that when we drove up through the trees, the house seemed very big, and grey, and still, for it was getting dark, and there was no sound about the place. It was so ghost-like that it rather frightened me; but in the hall we passed the door of a large room, and there I got a glimpse of a very gay and brilliant place, and I heard some people talking. Mr. Trelyou was waiting for me when I came down again, and he took me into the drawing-room and introduced me to

his mother, who was very kind to me, but did not seem inclined to speak much to any one. There was no other lady in the room—only those two clergymen who were in church last Sunday, and Mr. Trehella, and Mr. Roscorla. I thought Mr. Roscorla was a little embarrassed when he came forward to shake hands with me—and that was natural, for all the people must have known—and he looked at my dress the moment I entered the room; and then, Mabyn, I did thank you in my heart for letting me have it; for I had forgotten that Mr. Roscorla would regard me as being on my trial, and I hope he was not ashamed of me.”

“Ashamed of you!” said Mabyn, with a sudden flash of anger. “Do you mean that *he* was on his trial?”

“Be quiet. Well, you must know, that Mr. Trelyon was in very high spirits, but I never saw him so good-natured, and he

must needs take me in to dinner, and I sat on his right hand. Mrs. Trelyon told me it was only a quiet little family party; and I said I was very glad. Do you know, Mabyn, there is something about her that you can't help liking—I think it is her voice and her soft way of looking at you; but she is so very gentle and ordinarily so silent, that she makes you feel as if you were a very forward, and talkative, and rude person——”

“That is precisely what you are, Wenna,” Mabyn observed, in her school-girl sarcasm.

“But Mr. Trelyon, he was talking to everybody at once—all round the table—I never saw him in such spirits; and most of all he was very kind to Mr. Trewhella, and I liked him for that. He told me he had asked Mr. Trewhella because I was coming; and one thing I noticed was, that he was always sending the butler to

fill Mr. Trewhella's glass, or to offer him some different wine, whereas he let the other two clergymen take their chance. Mr. Roscorla was at the other end of the table—he took in Mrs. Trelyon—I hope he was not vexed that I did not have a chance of speaking to him the whole evening; but how could I help it? He would not come near me in the drawing-room—perhaps that was proper, considering that we are engaged; only I hope he is not vexed.”

For once Miss Mabyn kept a hold over her tongue, and did not reveal the thoughts that were uppermost in her mind.

“Well, after dinner Mrs. Trelyon and I went back to the drawing-room; and it was very brilliant and beautiful; but oh! one felt so much alone in the big place that I was glad when she asked me if I would play something for her. It was something to think about; but I had no music, and

I had to begin and recollect all sorts of pieces that I had almost forgotten. At first she was at the other end of the room, in a low easy-chair of rose-coloured silk, and she looked really very beautiful, and sad, and as if she were dreaming. But by and by she came over and sat by the piano; and it was as if you were playing to a ghost, that listened without speaking. I played one or two of the ‘Songs without Words’—those I could recollect easily—then Beethoven’s ‘Farewell;’ but while I was playing that, I happened to turn a little bit, and, do you know, she was crying in a quiet and silent way. Then she put her hand gently on my arm, and I stopped playing, but I did not turn towards her, for there was something so strange and sad in seeing her cry that I was nearly crying myself, and I did not know what was troubling her. Then, do you know, Mabyn, she rose and put her hand on my head, and said, ‘I

hear you are a very good girl : I hope you will come and see me.' Then I told her I was sorry that something I had played had troubled her ; and as I saw she was still distressed, I was very glad when she asked me if I would put on a hood and a shawl and take a turn with her round some of the paths outside. It is such a beautiful night to-night, Mabyn ; and up there, where you seemed to be just under the stars, the scents of the flowers were so sweet. Sometimes we walked under the trees, almost in darkness, and then we would come out on the clear space of the lawn, and find the skies overhead, and then we would go into the rose garden, and all the time she was no longer like a ghost, but talking to me as if she had known me a long time. And she is such a strange woman, Mabyn—she seems to live so much apart from other people, and to look at everything just as it affects herself. Fancy a harp, you know,

never thinking of the music it was making ; but looking all the time at the quivering of its own strings. I hope I did not offend her ; for when she was saying some very friendly things about me—of course Mr. Trelyon had been telling her a heap of nonsense—about helping people and that, she seemed to think that the only person to be considered in such cases was yourself, and not those whom you might try to help. Well, when she was talking about the beautiful sensations of being benevolent—and how it softened your heart and refined your feelings to be charitable—I am afraid I said something I should not have said, for she immediately turned and asked me what more I would have her do. Well, I thought to myself, if I have offended her, it's done and can't be helped ; and so I plunged into the very thing I had been thinking of all the way in the brougham—

“The Sewing Club!” said Mabyn ; for

Wenna had already spoken of her dark and nefarious scheme to her sister.

“Yes; once I was in it, I told her of the whole affair; and what she could do if she liked. She was surprised, and I think a little afraid. ‘I do not know the people,’ she said, ‘as you do. But I should be delighted to give you all the money you required, if you would undertake the rest.’ ‘Oh no, madam,’ said I (afterwards she asked me not to call her so), ‘that is impossible. I have many things to do at home, especially at present, for my mother is not well. What little time I can give to other people has many calls on it. And I could not do all this by myself.’”

“I should think not,” said Mabyn, rising up in great indignation, and beginning to walk up and down the room. “Why, Wenna, they’d work your fingers to the bone, and never say thank you. You do far too much already—I say you

do far too much already—and the idea that you should do that! You may say what you like about Mrs. Trelyon—she may be a very good lady, but I consider it nothing less than mean—I consider it disgraceful, mean, and abominably wicked, that she should ask you to do all this work and do nothing herself!”

“My dear child,” said Wemma, “you are quite unjust. Mrs. Trelyon is neither mean nor wicked; but she was in ignorance, and she is timid, and unused to visiting poor people. When I showed her that no one in Eglosilyan could so effectively begin the Club as herself—and that the reckless giving of money that she seemed inclined to was the worst sort of kindness—and when I told her of all my plans of getting the materials wholesale, and making the husbands subscribe, and the women sew, and all that I have told you, she took to the plan with an almost childish enthusiasm;

and now it is quite settled, and the only danger is that she may destroy the purpose of it by being over-generous. Don't you see, Mabyu, it is her first effort in actual and practical benevolence — she seems hitherto only to have satisfied her sense of duty or pleased her feelings by giving cheques to public charities — and she is already only a little too eager and interested in it. She doesn't know what a slow and wearisome thing it is to give some little help to your neighbours discreetly."

"Oh, Wenna," her sister said, "what a manager you are! Sometimes I think you must be a thousand years of age; and other times you seem so silly about your own affairs that I can't understand you. Did Mr. Roscorla bring you home?"

"No, but he came in the brougham along with Mr. Trelyon. There was a great deal of joking about the conquest — so they said — I had made of Mrs. Trelyon ;

but you see how it all came about, Mabyn. She was so interested in this scheme——”

“Oh yes ; I see how it all came about,” said Mabyn, quite contentedly. “And now you are very tired, you poor little thing, and I shan’t ask you any more about your dinner-party to-night. Here is a candle.”

Wenna was just going into her own room, when her sister turned and said—

“Wenna?”

“Yes, dear?”

“Do you think that His Royal Highness Mr. Roscorla condescended to be pleased with your appearance, and your manners, and your dress?”

“Don’t you ask impertinent questions,” said Wenna, as she shut the door.

CHAPTER XV.

A LEAVE-TAKING OF LOVERS.

WENNA had indeed made a conquest of the pale and gentle lady up at the Hall, which at another time might have been attended with important results to the people of Eglosilyan. But at this period of the year the Trelyons were in the habit of leaving Cornwall for a few months; Mrs. Trelyon generally going to some continental watering place, while her son proceeded to accept such invitations as he could get to shoot in the English counties. This autumn Harry Trelyon accompanied his mother as far as Etretat, where a number of her friends had made up a small party. From this point

she wrote to Wenna, saying how sorry she was she could not personally help in founding that Sewing Club, but offering to send a handsome subscription. Wenna answered the letter in a dutiful spirit, but firmly declined the offer. Then nothing was heard of the Trelyons for a long time, except that now and again a hamper of game would make its appearance at Eglosilyan, addressed to Miss Wenna Rosewarne in a sprawling schoolboy's hand, which she easily recognized. Master Harry was certainly acting on his own theory, that now she was engaged he could give her presents, or otherwise be as familiar and friendly with her as he pleased.

It was a dull, slow, and dreary winter. Mr. Roscorla was deeply engaged with his Jamaica project, and was occasionally up in London for a fortnight at a time. He had got the money from young Trelyon, and soon hoped to set out—as he told Wenna—

to make his fortune. She put no obstacle in his way, nor yet did she encourage him to go; it was for him to decide, and she would abide by his decision. For the rest, he never revived that request of his that they should be married before he went.

Eglosilyan in winter time is a very different place from the Eglosilyan of the happy summer months. The wild coast is sombre and gloomy. The uplands are windy, and bleak, and bare. There is no shining plain of blue lying around the land, but a dark and cheerless sea, that howls in the night time as it beats on the mighty walls of black rock. It is rather a relief, indeed—to break the mournful silence of those projecting cliffs and untenanted bays—when the heavens are shaken with a storm, and when the gigantic waves wash into the small harbour, so that the coasters seeking shelter there have to be scuttled and temporarily sunk in order to save them.

Then there are the fierce rains, to guard against which the seaward-looking houses have been faced with slate; and the gardens get dank and wet, and the ways are full of mire, and no one dares venture out on the slippery cliffs. It was a tedious and a cheerless winter.

Then Mrs. Rosewarne was more or less of an invalid the most of the time, and Wenna was much occupied by household cares. Occasionally, when her duties indoors and in the cottages of her humble friends had been got over, she would climb up the hill on the other side of the mill-stream to have a look around her. One seemed to breathe more freely up there among the rocks and furze than in small parlours or kitchens where children had to be laboriously taught. And yet the picture was not cheerful. A grey and leaden sea—a black line of cliffs standing sharp against it until lost in the mist of the south—the

green slopes over the cliffs touched here and there with the brown of withered bracken—then down in the two valleys the leafless trees, and gardens, and cottages of Eglosilyan, the slates ordinarily shining wet with the rain. One day Wenna received a brief little letter from Mrs. Trelyon, who was at Mentone, and who said something about the balmy air, and the beautiful skies, and the blue water around her; and the girl, looking out on the hard and stern features of this sombre coast, wondered how such things could be.

Somehow there was so much ordinary and commonplace work to do that Wenna almost forgot that she was engaged; and Mr. Roscorla, continually occupied with his new project, seldom cared to remind her that they were on the footing of sweet-hearts. Their relations were of an eminently friendly character, but little more—in view of the forthcoming separation he

scarcely thought it worth while to have them anything more. Sometimes he was inclined to apologize to her for the absence of sentiment and romanticism which marked their intimacy; but the more he saw of her the more he perceived that she did not care for that sort of thing, and was, indeed, about as anxious to avoid it as he was himself. She kept their engagement a secret. He once offered her his arm in going home from church; she made some excuse, and he did not repeat the offer. When he came in of an evening to have a chat with George Rosewarne they talked about the subjects of the day as they had been accustomed to do long before this engagement; and Wenna sat and sewed in silence, or withdrew to a side-table to make up her account-books. Very rarely indeed—thanks to Miss Mabyn, whose hostilities had never ceased—had he a chance of seeing his betrothed alone, and then, some-

how, their conversation invariably took a practical turn. It was not a romantic courtship.

He considered her a very sensible girl. He was glad that his choice was approved by his reason. She was not beautiful ; but she had qualities that would last—intelligence, sweetness, and a sufficient fund of gentle humour to keep a man in good spirits. She was not quite in his own sphere of life ; but then, he argued with himself, a man ought always to marry a woman who is below him rather than above him—in social position, or in wealth, or in brain, or in all three—for then she is all the more likely to respect and obey him, and to be grateful to him. Now, if you do not happen to have won the deep and fervent love of a woman—a thing that seldom occurs—gratitude is a very good substitute. Mr. Roscorla was quite content.

“ Wenna,” said he, one day after they

had got into the new year, and when one had begun to look forward to the first indications of spring in that southern county, "the whole affair is now afloat, and it is time I should be too—forgive the profound witticism. Everything has been done out there; we can do no more here; and my partners think I should sail about the fifteenth of next month."

Was he asking her permission, or expecting some utterance of regret that he looked at her so? She cast down her eyes, and said, rather timidly—

"I hope you will have a safe voyage—and be successful."

He was a little disappointed that she said nothing more; but he himself immediately proceeded to deal with the aspects of the case in a most businesslike manner.

"And then," said he, "I don't want to put you to the pain of taking a formal and solemn farewell as the ship sails. One

always feels downhearted in watching a ship go away, even though there is no reason. I must go to London in any case for a few days before sailing, and so I thought that if you wouldn't mind coming as far as Launceston—with your mother or sister—you could drive back here without any bother."

"If you do not think it unkind," said Wenna, in a low voice, "I should prefer that. For I could not take mamma further than Launceston, I think."

"I shall never think anything you do unkind," said he. "I do not think you are capable of unkindness."

He wished at this moment to add something about her engaged-ring, but could not quite muster up courage. He paused for a minute, and became embarrassed, and then told her what a first-class cabin to Jamaica would cost.

And at length the day came round. The weather had been bitterly cold and raw for

the previous two or three weeks ; though it was March the world seemed still frozen in the grasp of winter. Early on this bleak and grey forenoon Mr. Roscorla walked down to the inn, and found the waggonette at the door. His luggage had been sent on to Southampton some days before ; he was ready to start at once.

Wenna was a little pale and nervous when she came out and got into the waggonette ; but she busied herself in wrapping abundant rugs and shawls round her mother, who protested against being buried alive.

“ Good-bye,” said her father, shaking hands with Mr. Roscorla carelessly, “ I hope you’ll have a fine passage. Wenna, don’t forget to ask for those cartridge-cases as you drive back from the station.”

But Miss Maby’s method of bidding him farewell was far more singular. With an affectation of playfulness she offered him

both her hands, and so, making quite sure that she had a grip on the left hand of that emerald ring that had afforded her much consolation, she said—

“Good-bye. I hope you will get safely out to Jamaica.”

“And back again?” said he, with a laugh.

Mabyn said nothing, turned away, and pretended to be examining the outlines of the waggonette. Nor did she speak again to any one until the small party drove away; and then, when they had got over the bridge and along the valley, and up and over the hill, she suddenly ran to her father, flung her arms round his neck, kissed him, and cried out—

“Hurrah! the horrid creature is gone, and he’ll never come back—never!”

“Mabyn,” said her father, in a peevish ill-temper, as he stooped to pick up the broken pipe which she had caused him to

let fall, "I wish you wouldn't be such a fool."

But Mabyu was not to be crushed. She said, "Poor dad-da, has it broken its pipe?" and then she walked off, with her head very erect, and a very happy light on her face, while she sang to herself, after the manner of an acquaintance of hers, "Oh, the men of merry, merry England!"

There was less cheerfulness in that wagonette that was making its way across the bleak uplands—a black speck in the grey and wintry landscape. Wenna was really sorry that this long voyage, and all its cares and anxieties, should lie before one who had been so kind to her; it made her miserable to think of his going away into strange lands all by himself, with little of the buoyancy, and restlessness, and ambition of youth to bear him up. As for him, he was chiefly occupied during this silent drive across to Launceston in nursing the fancy

that he was going out to fight the world for her sake — as a younger man might have done—and that, if he returned successful, her gratitude would be added to the substantial results of his trip. It rather pleased him to imagine himself in this position. After all he was not so very elderly; and he was in very good preservation for his years. He was more than a match in physique, in hopefulness, and in a knowledge of the world that ought to stand him in good stead, for many a younger man who, with far less chances of success, was bent on making a fortune for the sake of some particular girl.

He was not displeased to see that she was sorry about his going away. She would soon get over that. He had no wish that she should continually mope in his absence; nor did he, indeed, believe that any sensible girl would do anything of the sort.

At the same time he had no fear whatever as to her remaining constant to him. A girl altogether out of the way of meeting marriageable young men would be under no temptation to let her fancies rove. Moreover, Wenna Rosewarne had something to gain, in social position, by her marriage with him, which she could not be so blind as to ignore; and had she not, too, the inducement of waiting to see whether he might not bring back a fortune to her? But the real cause of his trust in her was that experience of her uncompromising sincerity and keen sense of honour that he had acquired during a long and sufficiently intimate friendship. If the thought of her breaking her promise ever occurred to him, it was not as a serious possibility, but as an idle fancy, to be idly dismissed.

“You are very silent,” he said to her.

“I am sorry you are going away,” she said, simply and honestly; and the admission pleased and flattered him.

“You don’t give me courage,” he said laughingly. “You ought to consider that I am going out into the world—even at my time of life—to get a lot of money and come back to make a grand lady of you.”

“Oh!” said she in sudden alarm—for such a thought had never entered her head—“I hope you are not going away on my account. You know that I wish for nothing of that kind. I hope you did not consider me in resolving to go to Jamaica!”

“Well, of course, I considered you,” said he, good-naturedly; “but don’t alarm yourself; I should have gone if I had never seen you. But naturally I have an additional motive in going when I look at the future.”

That was not a pleasant thought for Wenna Rosewarne. It was not likely to comfort her on stormy nights, when she might lie awake and think of a certain ship at sea. She had acquiesced in his going, as

in one of those things which men do because they are men and seem bound to satisfy their ambition with results which women might consider unnecessary. But that she should have exercised any influence on his decision—that alarmed her with a new sense of responsibility, and she began to wish that he could suddenly drop this project, have the waggonette turned round, and drive back to the quiet content and small economies and peaceful work of Eglosilyan.

They arrived in good time at Launceston, and went for a stroll up to the fine old castle while luncheon was being got ready at the hotel. Wenna did not seem to regard that as a very enticing meal when they sat down to it. The talk was kept up chiefly by her mother and Mr. Roscorla, who spoke of life on shipboard, and the best means of killing the tedium of it. Mr. Roscorla said he would keep a journal all

the time he was away, and send instalments from time to time to Wenna.

They walked from the hotel down to the station. Just outside the station they saw a landau, drawn by a pair of beautiful greys, which were being walked up and down.

“Surely those are Mrs. Trelyon’s horses,” Wenna said; and as the carriage, which was empty, came nearer, the coachman touched his hat. “Perhaps she is coming back to the Hall to-day.”

The words were uttered carelessly, for she was thinking of other things. When they at last stood on the platform, and Mr. Roscorla had chosen his seat, he could see that she was paler than ever. He spoke in a light and cheerful way, mostly to her mother, until the guard requested him to get into the carriage, and then he turned to the girl and took her hand.

“Good-bye, my dear Wenna,” said he.

“God bless you! I hope you will write to me often.”

Then he kissed her cheek, shook hands with her again, and got into the carriage. She had not spoken a word. Her lips were trembling—she could not speak—and he saw it.

When the train went slowly out of the station, Wenna stood and looked after it with something of a mist before her eyes, until she could see nothing of the handkerchief that was being waved from one of the carriage windows. She stood quite still, until her mother put her hand on her shoulder, and then she turned and walked away with her. They had not gone three yards, when they were met by a tall young man who had come rushing down the hill and through the small station-house.

“By Jove!” said he, “I am just too late. How do you do, Mrs. Rosewarne? How are you, Wenna?”—and then he

paused, and a great blush overspread his face—for the girl looked up at him and took his hand silently, and he could see there were tears in her eyes. It occurred to him that he had no business there—and yet he had come on an errand of kindness. So he said, with some little embarrassment, to Mrs. Rosewarne—

“I heard you were coming over to this train, and I was afraid you would find the drive back in the waggonette rather cold this evening. I have got our landau outside closed, you know—and I thought you might let me drive you over.”

Mrs. Rosewarne looked at her daughter. Wenna decided all such things, and the girl said to him, in a low voice—

“It is very kind of you.”

“Then just give me a second, that I may tell your man,” Trelyon said, and off he darted.

Was it his respect for Wenna's trouble,

or had it been his knocking about among strangers for six months, that seemed to have given to the young man (at least in Mrs. Rosewarne's eyes) something of a more courteous and considerate manner? When the three of them were being rapidly whirled along the Launceston highway in Mrs. Trelyon's carriage, Harry Trelyon was evidently bent on diverting Wenna's thoughts from her present cares; and he told stories, and asked questions, and related his recent adventures in such a fashion that the girl's face gradually lightened, and she grew interested and pleased. She, too, thought he was much improved—how, she could not exactly tell.

“Come,” said he, at last, “you must not be very downhearted about a mere holiday trip. You will soon get letters, you know, telling you all about the strange places abroad; and then, before you know where you are, you'll have to drive over

to the station, as you did to-day, to meet Mr. Roscorla coming back."

"It may be a very long time indeed," Wenna said; "and if he should come to any harm I shall know that I was the cause of it; for if it had not been for me, I don't believe he would have gone."

"Oh, that is quite absurd!—begging your pardon," said Master Harry, coolly. "Roscorla got a chance of making some money, and he took it, as any other man would. You had no more to do with it than I had—indeed, I had something to do with it—but that's a secret. No; don't you make any mistake about that. And he'll be precious well off when he's out there, and seeing everything going on smoothly, especially when he gets a letter from you, with a Cornish primrose or violet in it. And you'll get that soon now," he added, quickly seeing that Wenna blushed some-

what; "for I fancy there's a sort of smell in the air this afternoon that means spring-time. I think the wind has been getting round to the west all day; before night you will find a difference in the air, I can tell you."

"I think it has become very fresh and mild already," Wenna said, judging by an occasional breath of wind that came in at the top of the windows.

"Do you think you could bear the landau open?" said he, eagerly.

When they stopped to try—when they opened the windows—the predictions of the weather prophet had already been fulfilled, and a strange, genial mildness and freshness pervaded the air. They were now near Eglosilyan, on the brow of a hill, and away below them they could see the sea lying dull and grey under the cloudy sky. But while they waited for the coachman to uncover the landau, a soft and

yellow light began to show itself far out in the west, a break appeared in the clouds, and a vast comb of gold shot shining down on the plain of water beneath. The western skies were opening up; and what with this new and beautiful light, and what with the sweet air that awoke a thousand pleasant and pathetic memories, it seemed to Wenna Rosewarne that the tender spring-time was at length at hand, with all its wonder of yellow crocuses and pale snowdrops, and the first faint shimmerings of green on the hedges and woods. Her eyes filled with tears—she knew not why. Surely she was not old enough to know anything of the sadness that comes to some when the heavens are cleared, and a new life stirs in the trees, and the world awakes to the fairness of the spring. She was only eighteen; she had a lover; and she was as certain of his faithfulness as of her own.

In bidding them good-bye at the door of the inn, Mr. Harry Trelyon told them that he meant to remain in Eglosilyan for some months to come.

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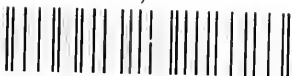


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